

**THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF ORPHANED LEARNERS AT
HIGH SCHOOLS IN SHAMAVUNGA CIRCUIT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE,
SOUTH AFRICA**

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF ORPHANED LEARNERS AT HIGH SCHOOLS IN SHAMAVUNGA CIRCUIT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Tsakani Gladys Ringani

Date

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Firstly, I would like to thank the Almighty God for giving me the extraordinary strength I required to complete this study.

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to my beloved husband, Apostle J J Ringani, who has supported me throughout the entire process of completing this dissertation and who encouraged me to endure, no matter the obstacles in life. To my daughter and my son, Faith and Abednego, thank you for allowing me to sacrifice even your time with me for the sake of this dissertation, love you!!!!

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Thank you also to the principal of the high school which participated in the study, the educators and the guardians of the learners, as without them the project could not have been successful.

NA KHENSA

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late daughter, Rhandu Ringani Mazibuko, my late mother, Nompumelelo Irene Ndaba Makamu, and my granddaughter, Lulani Joey Mazibuko.

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the academic performance of orphaned secondary school learners between the ages of thirteen and eighteen in the Shamavunga Circuit. The study used the qualitative method. This included the sampling of ten orphaned learners from one school in the Shamavunga Circuit. The qualitative component of the study involved sampling three educators and three guardians of orphaned learners from one secondary school in the Shamavunga Circuit. This study was aimed at investigation the perceptions of educators and learners of the academic performance of orphaned learners at secondary schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo province. The study found that the educators were of the view that, as compared to their counterparts, orphaned learners are more likely to display unruly behaviour, a lack of concentration and an inability to complete their written schoolwork. The educators also suggested that because the majority of orphaned learners were heading their families (child-headed), there was no one to monitor and supervise them. On the other hand, it has been suggested that the majority of orphaned learners were staying with their caregivers/guardians. The study also revealed that the educators were not well trained in terms of dealing with orphaned learners. In other words they lacked the proper skills and knowledge required to deal with orphaned learners. On the other words, the orphaned learners were of the view that some of the educators were not treating them well as they called them names and they were also not providing them with the support that they should have been receiving from adults who should be playing a parental role in their lives. Furthermore, some of the orphaned learners suggested that the caregivers (guardians) with whom they lived misused their grants for their own benefit. The study also revealed that the guardians of orphaned learners were often not coping and were uneducated. Accordingly, they were unable to adequately meet the needs of these orphaned learners. In conclusion, the study recommended interventions at the school, government as well as the community levels. For example, it is suggested that grandparents (guardians) be provided with support as they were

becoming exhausted as a result of having to look after the orphaned learners. It is also suggested that the government build more drop-in centres and orphanages and also provide training for the educators who have to deal with the orphaned learners.

KEY WORDS: Academic performance, orphaned learners, secondary school.

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

When an individual loses both parents they become an orphan. If the individual concerned is still a child when this happens, he or she is often faced with significant challenges as the people who provided for them and cared for them are deceased. The history of orphans is as old as history itself. Children have been left without both parents since time immemorial. In many instances this has resulted in child-headed households in many parts of the world (Hendricks & Magano 2014)

Throughout the world orphaned children suffer the consequences of the so-called cycles of poverty, namely, dependency, welfare problems, learning difficulties, delinquency problems and maturation and vocational and career problems (Geoff & John 2000; Human Rights Watch 2005).

According to the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF 2005), a study in western Uganda revealed that less than 10% of orphaned children receive public support and services. It is, therefore, highly likely that the other approximately 90% suffer from one or other of the problems as identified by Geoff and John (2000) and the Human Rights Watch (2005). It is well documented that the Department of Social Development in South Africa assists orphaned children, especially those in the rural areas, to apply for grants. It does this with the intervention of service providers such as social workers in an effort to alleviate the plight of orphans as they are not in a position to initiate the process without the assistance of an adult (Nelson Mandela Children's Fund Report 2001:7). Orphaned learners are among the most vulnerable children and it is fitting that the protection of their rights should be the main focus of all individuals and agencies dealing with them. They require help to enable them to cope with the challenges they face at school and to find the courage to face life without their parents.

However, the treatment above towards orphans is not the case in many parts of the world. In Kenya, for example, the government, through the Ministry of Education (MOE), makes funds available to learning institutions for the paying for teachers and for purchases learning materials for all learners (Njihia 2014). Nevertheless, Njihia (2014) reveals that, in Kenya, despite the government money that is intended for OVCs (orphans and vulnerable children) in order to facilitate their wellbeing, before an orphaned learner may be identified as a beneficiary of such funds certain selection criterion must be met and, thus, it often happens that not all orphans are receive such assistance.

There are numerous learners in South Africa who are without parents. Case and Ardington (2006) note that there are an estimated 3.7 million orphans in South Africa, half of whom have lost one parent is either (maternal or paternal orphans where the mother or the father is dead) or both parents while 150 000 children are believed to be living in child-headed households.

The fact that orphaned children are faced with the challenge of adjusting to life without their parents often creates numerous problems for the child. Magampa (2014) argues that the loss of parents may result in psychological problems such as stress, poor self-concept, anxiety, and depression. These problems may result in a lack of concentration at school, thus leading to poor academic performance.

Magano's (2013) study found that orphaned learners often lack proper care and support because they are physically and emotionally neglected by their caregivers. It is, therefore, ironic that the primary reason why orphaned learners would live with their grandmothers and caregivers would be for security and the fulfilment of their basic needs. In the majority of cases, it is clear that the orphaned learners would have been better cared for if their biological parents were still alive.

Magano (2013) stresses that, with the death of the parents, the family structures that ought to support them collapse and, because of the death of their parents, some children are not able to find a lasting place of comfort to call home as they are sent

from one relative to the other. These orphaned children often find themselves living in conditions where they lack a caregiver. In view of the fact that their caregivers play an important role in motivating, supporting and providing for them, this lack of a caregiver will constitute a serious challenge for them. In support of this view, Magampa's (2014) study found that a learner's academic performance or achievement is more dependent on the learner's home conditions and social context than on the formal learning at school.

Rozana's (2009) study, which investigated the impact of parental death on schooling and subjective wellbeing in middle childhood, found that the death of a mother increases the chances of the learner not learning to write if he/she is under 10 years of age. Rozana (2009) further identified that educators are of the view believe that orphaned learners tend to perform worse at school as compared to non-orphaned learners. In addition, orphaned learners are more likely to display behavioural and emotional problems than non-orphaned learners (Magampa 2014). However, these problems have not been adequately linked to the learner's attitude to learning and, in particular, its impact on the learner's academic performance.

1.2 Rationale and motivation for the study

Shamavunga Circuit, the area identified for the purposes of this study, forms part of the Mopani region of Limpopo. Mopani is a small region, the inhabitants of which live in rural areas, township areas and informal settlement. Most of the schools in the region are regarded as previously disadvantaged schools. These previously disadvantaged schools draw learners mainly from underprivileged families. It has recently been discovered that a number of the learners in this district are orphans and that some of them live alone without any adult to care and support them while some live with relatives (caregivers) who treat them badly (Ayieko 2006).

Many of the orphaned children, especially those in rural areas, are not aware that they are entitled to apply for grants from the Department of Social Development

(Nelson Mandela Children's Fund Report 2001:7). The intervention of service providers such as social workers is, therefore, essential to alleviate their plight as they are not in a position to initiate the process without the assistance of an adult.

Orphaned learners are among the most vulnerable children and it is fitting that the protection of their rights should be the main focus of all individuals and agencies dealing with these children. In this regard, it is vital that broad-based discussions are held and a heightened awareness of and sensitivity to their plight fostered with the special needs and rights of these children being acknowledged and possible intervention strategies sought (Nelson Mandela Children's Fund Report 2001:7).

The Nelson Mandela Children's Fund Report (2001:12), which was based on a study of the situation and the special needs of children in child-headed households, revealed that "South Africa has the fastest growing rate of the orphans in the world and that the number of orphan learners is increasing at an alarming rate and this is becoming a serious social problem". The report also articulated that absenteeism from school by learners is escalating; educators are frustrated by low levels of performance by their learners; personal hygiene amongst learners is becoming a problem and the integrity, cohesion, capacity and efficacy of the extended family as a social support network is being undermined by factors such as social upheaval, poverty, unemployment and over-stretched resources.

The above points to the intellectual (or the scholarship) rationale for this study. On personal grounds (motivation) the researcher inserted herself into the equation as an 'insider'. The researcher is an educator, a member of a school management team (SMT) and the grandmother of a maternal orphan aged nine. When the researcher's daughter died nine years ago, she left behind a two-year-old child. This situation was not easy for the researcher, who asked herself "How will my granddaughter cope at school without a mother to motivate her?" However, the child is doing well at school. Notwithstanding her granddaughter's progress at school and broadly considering the many challenges that the researcher sometimes faces as the caregiver, she is able only to imagine the experiences and challenges that other orphaned learners face, particularly concerning their academic performance. With this in mind, the researcher

deemed it necessary to describe and discuss the purpose, objectives and aim of this study.

1.3. Aims and objectives of the study

1.3.1 Main aim of the study

The main aim of the study was to investigate the perceptions of educators, guardians and orphaned learners of the academic performance of orphaned learners at secondary schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo province.

1.4.2 Secondary aims of the study

The secondary aims of the study included:

- Understand the perceptions of educators of the academic performance of orphaned learners at schools
- Understand the perceptions of orphaned learners of their academic performance of schools.
- Understand the perceptions of guardians of orphaned learners' academic performance at home environment.
- Identify the reasons why orphaned learners are not performing well in secondary schools.
- Investigate the challenges experienced by orphaned learners in schools.
- Better understand the challenges faced by orphaned learners in their homes

1.4. Research questions

1.4.1 Main research question

What are the perceptions of educators, guardians and orphaned learners of the

academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo province?

1.4.2. Sub-research questions

- (1) How do educators perceive the academic performance of orphaned learners at schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo?
- (2) How do orphaned learners perceive their own academic performance?
- (3) How do guardians of orphaned learners perceive the academic performance of orphaned learners?
- (4) Why are orphaned learners at high schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo province not performing academically?
- (5) What are the challenges experienced by orphaned learners at schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo?
- (6) What are the challenges which orphaned learners face at home that impact on their academic performance?

1.5 Statement of research problem

According to UNICEF (2015), there are 153 million orphans worldwide. Furthermore, according to UNICEF (2015), 60% of the girls become prostitutes and 70% of boys become hardened criminals. As Magampa (2014) notes, for orphans the loss of their parents interferes with the development of a positive self-identity, which may then lead to poor academic performance.

According to Togom's (2009) study, after the death of both parents, an orphan continues to face enormous uncertainties. If they are living with extended family members, they may become uncertain about their role within the existing family, and the burden they are placing upon the family. They may also be uncertain about their

education, and whether the family will be able to pay the school fees to send them to school. Thus, orphaned children require support to cope with the emotional trauma resulting from the death of their parents. However, there appears to be limited understanding about how they cope with school in relation to their academic performance, particularly in settings which are characterised by high numbers of orphans, for example Shamavunga Circuit in Mopani, Limpopo. Owing to the dearth of research on this issue, it was believed that the information that this study sought to uncover would advance the existing body of knowledge on the topic.

1.6 Limitations of the study

The limitations of a study refer to the limitation factors, conditions or restrictive weaknesses that occur when it is not possible for the study design to control certain factors (Locke, Spirduso & Spiderman 2007 in Nkosi 2011). In view of the fact that the study focused on the issue of orphaned learners in secondary schools, and because orphanhood is a sensitive and emotional issue, this presented as a challenge to the researcher as some of the learner participants became very emotional when their participation in the study reminded themselves what they had gone through and were still going through as a result of the death of their parents. This was the case with one of the participant learners who did not utter a word but just cried throughout the interview, despite having initially agreed to participate in the study. Time was another limiting factor particularly as the interviews were conducted after school hours, during study, and study was scheduled to last one hour only, after which the participants educators had to rush to be time for their public transport. This often disturbed the flow of the interview.

The study focused on one secondary school only and on orphaned learners between the ages of 15 and 17. Orphans below the age of fourteen and above the age of seventeen were not part of the study. The researcher aimed to focus mainly on learners in Grades 10 to 12 (usually in the age range of 15 to 17) and, hence, the exclusion of the other age groups. In addition, orphans who were not in school at the time of the study were also not included in the study, neither were orphans who did not fall under

the Shamavunga Circuit at the time the study, nor were orphans who were not attending the one sampled school.

The sample size for this qualitative study was small (10 learners, 3 guardians and 3 educators). Based on the above considerations, it was not possible to generalise the results of the study to larger populations beyond the sample itself. However, it was proposed that the results could form the basis for future studies that could draw larger samples.

1.7 Philosophical assumption/paradigm

A paradigm is a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality and which give rise to the particular world view. In other words a paradigm is used to address certain fundamental assumptions which are taken on faith, such as beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology), and the relationship between the knower and the known (epistemology) (Maree 2007:47–48). According to Lincoln and Guba (2005), as cited in Rangongo (2011:67), a paradigm is what we think about the world but not able to prove.

In this study the researcher believed that orphaned learners perform poorly academically when compared to non-orphaned learners. Accordingly, the researcher made the assumption that educators would tend to hold the view that, in general, orphaned learners performed poorly academically and that they were beset by a number of psychosocial problems.

1.8 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that informed this study was based on two theories, namely, human need theory and critical emancipatory theory (CET). According to human need theory the needs of humans (including children) are few, finite and constant in all cultures. Human needs theory states that everyone, including learners, have physical, emotional, social and intellectual needs that must be met if they are to

enjoy life and develop to their full potential (Van Dyk 2005).

In the case of learners, the absence of parents would probably mean that the learners' needs might not be met. This may result in, among other things, the learners being academically unproductive. At this point, the needs of learners, as in the case of any other person, should be understood in the context of Abram Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This hierarchy of needs divides human needs into psychological, safety, belongingness, self-esteem and self-actualisation needs. These needs are hierarchically arranged such that the fulfilment of the lower needs propels the individual to the next level (Jerome 2013). All human beings need to live in safe environments whereby their lives are not threatened. Learners have a greater desire for this need to be fulfilled because they need to feel secure. Furthermore, love, friendship and comradeship are all included in the need for love, affection and belongingness. At this level, the love of family and friends is extremely important (Hendricks & Magano 2014). Parents are, therefore, extremely important agents in meeting their children's overall needs and their absence will mean that the children's needs are not met with this also affecting the children's academic performance. It is an essential human truth that we all want to belong to someone or something (Daniels 2016).

What is critical emancipatory theory (CET)?

Jurgen Habermas is the principal modern theorist who has tried to evaluate the works of Marx and Weber on critical theory.

Critical theorists operate on the assumption that people are the *self-creators of their own history*. Thus, critical emancipatory theorists believe that a person has the potential to become whatever he/she so wishes to become as long as that person (orphan) is given the resources (educators and caregivers) to enable him/her to perform and achieve. In view of the fact that orphaned learners are said to be marginalised, CET was deemed to be relevant in this context as it would inform the researcher about both the learners' orphanhood mentality as well as their negative thinking that they are not capable of achieving good marks and performing well

academically. These learners often perceive education as difficult and meant for the non-orphaned learners and learners who come from affluent homes. Literature confirms that orphanhood is a social challenge and, thus, CET addresses issues such as empowerment in a context of inequality, oppression, dominion, suppression, alienation, power and transformation (Mertens 1998; Chilisa & Preece 2005).

In the learner context CET seeks to bring about independence from the influences on individual learners and, thus, it reveals some unjustified assumptions based on the understanding and interpretation of the experiences of individuals who, in this study, are orphaned learners. In dealing effectively with the interpretation of the experiences of human behaviour and/or attitudes, an understanding of the influence of contextual factors must form the basis for interventions that result in the development of the decision-making skills required if social challenges are to be met (Mthiyane 2015).

The researcher believed and anticipated that it was possible to improve the orphaned learners' situation with regard to their schooling even without their parents. In addition, improved academic performance or achievement is in line with the assertions of CET, in particular, where CET seeks to empower people to be self- confident because, when an individual is emancipated, the individual has been liberated. It is, therefore, possible that, with sincerity of purpose and commitment, government, caregivers, grandparents and the community at large could all assist in providing education. The fulfilment of this need, in accordance with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, would encourage orphaned learners to remain positive and to be motivated in terms of their academic performance.

1.9 Operational definition of terms

The following operational concepts are defined in order to clarify their meaning in the context of this study:

Academic

Academic refers to scholarly as opposed to technical or practical (Kassarnig 2017).

Academic is also defined as relating to scholarly performance (Answers.com), thus, the term academic in this study will refer to scholastic work.

Performance

Sunderland (1995) defines performance as the execution of a particular situation as opposed to what has been learned about the task in question. Kuper and Kuper (1985) define performance as a concept that is broadly used to emphasise the extent to which the regularities of social life are performed, rather than simply pre-existing. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (2002) defines performance as the execution or accomplishment of an action, operations or process undertaken or ordered or as the doing of any action or work, especially as observable under particular conditions. (Kassarnig 2017) defines performance as achievement. Performance in the context of this study will refer to academic achievement.

Academic performance

Academic performance refers to the extent to which students, teachers and/or institutions have achieved their short- or long-term educational goals. According to Potokri (2012; 2013), academic performance is defined as the outcomes of student study at the end of a given period. The researcher in this study intended to conduct an investigation into the academic performance of orphaned learners.

Orphan

An orphan is defined as a child whose parents are dead, according to *the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, a child bereft of former protection and advantages.

Mentjies, Hall and Marera (2010) define an orphan as a child under the age of eighteen years whose mother, father or both biological parents have died (including those whose living status is reported as unknown, but excluding those whose living status is unspecified). The concept of orphan in the context of this study referred to learners between the ages of fifteen and seventeen who had lost both parents, those who had

lost one parent and never had any contact with the other parent or those who had been born out of wedlock, lost their mother and never known their father.

Orphanhood

Orphanhood refers to a state whereby a child's parents are dead and the child has been left alone either to fend for him/herself, or depend on a relative, friend or caregiver/caretaker (Beegle, De Weerd & Dercon, 2006).

Secondary school

Secondary school refers to a school for young people between the ages of 11 and 17 or 18.

School

School refers to a place of instruction, an institution for education, especially primary or secondary education or for the teaching of special subjects (Macdonald, 1991). *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (2002) defines a school as an institution in which formal instruction in a specific skill or attribute is given, or an environment or situation in which an instruction or training is obtained.

1.10 Chapter outline

This dissertation comprises five chapters:

❖ Chapter 1: Introduction of the study

This chapter discusses the background of the study, the problem statement, the aims of the study, the research questions, the rationale behind the study, its limitations and delimitations, the assumptions underlying the study and the ethical consideration that were taken into account during the study. In addition, the chapter defines the terms relevant to the study.

❖ Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter focus on a review on the literature related to the orphaned learners' academic performance in high schools. This include research done locally and globally on the research topic and related topics.

❖ Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

This chapter discusses the research design, data collection and data analysis methods used in the study. The study population is described and the study sampling procedure explained. The qualitative methods used by the researcher are also explained. The chapter also discusses the ethical guidelines followed during the data collection stage of the study.

❖ Chapter 4: Data presentation and analysis

This chapter discusses the data presentation and data analysis in an effort to address the research questions and research aims of the study. The findings from the data analysis and the interpretation of the data are also presented in this chapter.

❖ Chapter 5: Summary of findings, recommendations and conclusion

1.11 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the academic performance of orphaned learners in secondary schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo in South Africa. The rationale behind the study, the research problem statement and the research questions and aims were also discussed. In addition, the chapter explored the assumptions underlying the study, the limitations and delimitations of the study as considerations that were taken into account during the study. The next chapter (chapter 2) presents a detailed review of existing literature on the academic performance of orphaned learners of secondary schools.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 discussed the basis of the study by highlighting the main introduction to the study, the background of the study, the rationale and motivation for the study, the aims and objectives of the study, the research questions and the statement of the research problem. Chapter 2 presents the literature review, that is, a review of similar and related topics to this study as addressed in existing literature. Accordingly, key issues, particularly as mentioned in the title of the study, and which was believed may also help to answer the research questions, were reviewed. In addition, the theoretical framework – theories that underpinned or guided the study – was presented.

2.2 Understandings of orphans

In terms of the African view, nature brings a child into the world but society nurtures, feeds, protects and develops the child to grow into a social being – a corporate person (Njala 2013). Njala (2013) also highlights the oft-quoted African saying: “It takes a village to raise a child”. In the culture in which the researcher grew up, a child does not belong to the biological parents alone but to the whole community. This notion is supported by the teaching imparted to a child that every woman of the child’s mother’s age is his/her mother and, hence, the child will call these women “mother”. In addition, every man of the child’s father’s age is a father and is, therefore, referred to as such.

However, African culture, in general, is facing the challenge of the paradigm shift that is taking place as far as the family is concerned. As a result of urbanisation, a gradual shift is taking place from an extended family network to the nuclear family, with the disappearance of the extended family network bringing with it numerous challenges,

Including the hope and future of the children left behind when their parents die. These children are known or referred to as orphans. It is often difficult to incorporate the orphans of dead relatives into a nuclear family. Notwithstanding issues such as financial challenges and the decline in the extended family and community support, people are being forced to look after their immediate family members. The absence of biological parents has also given rise to child-headed households with the children living by themselves without proper parental guidance and support.

Although the exact number of orphans in the world today is not known (Makuria 2015:7) but it is estimated to be approximately 201 million. The majority of these are found in Asia (60 million, with the next highest number being found in Mexico and then in Africa (Bar Association of San Francisco (BASF) 2012). Worldwide, it has been estimated that more than 7.9 million children under the age of 18 have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS and that 14.8 million of those orphaned children live in Africa (UNICEF 2010). Ethiopia is home to 4.6 million orphans – approximately 13% of the total population. Of these, an estimated 2.2 million people or 6.6% of the population in Ethiopia are living with HIV and this renders them vulnerable to life on streets as well as the dangers of human trafficking (MOH, 2002). HIV/AIDS has become the leading cause of death even in very productive societies. When a large number of individuals are ill as a result of HIV/AIDS, a ripple effect is felt up the pyramid, and hence in society at large (MOLSA 2003). Although only 10% of the total world's population live in sub-Saharan African countries, 67% of world's HIV-infected people live in these countries (UNAIDS & WHO 2009). In addition to this socioeconomic crisis and the difficult situations of orphaned learners left behind by their parents in African countries, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has resulted in 20 million grandparents becoming the primary caregivers of 8 million AIDS orphans and grandchildren. In addition, the majority of African families are confronting complex problems such as financial stress, lack of supporting health services and community discrimination because of HIV/AIDS (MOLSA 2004).

Various studies have identified the family as the first line of response in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS on orphaned children (UNAIDS 2001).

Other studies have revealed that in most sub-Saharan African countries, the extended families bear the responsibility of 90% of the orphaned children and suffer under the considerable economic and social pressures caused by the continued increase in the number of orphans (UNAIDS and UNICEF 2004). Ethiopia, with a per capital income of less than one US dollar per day, which is much the same as that of the other sub-Saharan African countries, is one of the poorest nations in the world and its economy is not able to support such a large number of orphans, with the extended families finding it extremely difficult to meet their own needs (Machellan 2005).

2.3 Academic performance of orphaned learners

Academic performance refers to the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved the short or long-term educational goals which were set. Potokri (2012) defines academic performance as the outcomes of student study at the end of a given period. In other words, academic performance implies the educational achievement of an individual for a specific period as determined by the institution in question. In this study, the academic performance of interest was that of orphaned learners in Grades 8 to 12 in secondary schools in South Africa. Makuria's (2017) study, which was conducted in Addis Ababa, concluded that the factors which adversely affect orphaned learners include:

- ❖ Disciplinary problems, lack of classroom management
- ❖ Lack of effective assessment and feedback
- ❖ Lack of interest in teaching and poor teaching methods
- ❖ Lack of support on the part of the educational authorities and
- ❖ Insufficient educational facilities to realise an effective teaching learning process in the class.

The researcher's view is that when learners are subjected to an educational environment, which lacks discipline and support from the education department,

they will lose interest and this has a negative impact on their academic performance. According to Magampa (2014), the academic performance of orphaned learners between the ages of eight and ten in primary school often varies, although orphaned children do tend to perform poorly at school when compared to non-orphaned children. Furthermore, the educators in Magampa's study were of the view that orphaned learners were more likely than their non-orphaned counterparts to achieve poor grades, as well as demonstrate a lack of concentration and inability to carry out their schoolwork. In addition, the educators were also of the view that orphaned children were more likely to display behavioural and emotional problems than non-orphans. These educators also suggested that the guardians of orphaned learners were not coping well and, accordingly, were unable to adequately attend to the needs of these children.

Magampa (2014) concluded by suggesting interventions at the school, government and community levels. It was also suggested that the grandparents (guardians) also as they were often exhausted because of having to look after their orphaned grandchildren. As a result of her observation, the researcher agrees with Magampa (2014) that when learners have lost both parents, they have to confront so many issues that they often fail to cope well at school. These orphaned children are still young and yet they have to fend for themselves and their siblings in making sure that there is always food in the house. One wonders what they think about during the day at school, with all their responsibility ahead after school, especially those who are heading their families.

Oyedele (2016) affirms the above that the orphaned learners' poor performance often results from the challenges they face in their lives as well as the limited support they receive from the government. In addition, Oyedele (2016) argues that the academic performance of orphaned learners is affected not only by the need to pay school fees but also depends significantly on their basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter and psychological help relating to the alleviation of the traumas of their parents' death, being met. According to Gilo (2017), the lack of psychological

support from individuals, communities, government and non-government organisations contributes to the poor academic achievement of orphaned learners. It is evident that the phenomenon of the poor academic performance of orphaned learners is not restricted to South Africa only but is a worldwide phenomenon which occurs in countries such as Zimbabwe, China, Tanzania and Kenya, among others. It is worth mentioning, however, that in other countries, such as Tanzania and Kenya, there are programmes in place to improve the academic performance of the orphans. The research findings of studies conducted in Tanzania reveal that not only are significant donations made to learners who are orphans in secondary school, but also that non-orphaned learners themselves are willing to donate to this cause. Maulaga's (2014) study revealed that when orphaned learners receive donations that assist them in meeting their basic needs, such as food and clothing, this helps them concentrate better in classes and also reduces their absenteeism from school, which improves their study efforts and enhances their psychosocial wellbeing.

Thus, as emphasised above, donations have a significant and positive effect on the academic performance of orphans in terms of reducing their absenteeism and dropout rate, improving both their concentration in class and their study efforts and enhancing their psychosocial wellbeing. Findings in Kenya revealed, based on the report from learners and educators participants in Nuru's (2015) study that the effective management of orphanages also has a positive impact on the academic performance of orphaned learners, as it creates a conducive environment for living and learning and, hence, the good performance. Findings in China revealed that orphaned learners were disadvantaged in terms of school performances in comparison with non-orphaned learners and that orphaned learners obtained the lowest marks in class while they also experienced learning difficulties because of the challenges they face (Tu 2009).

Gilo's (2017) study highlighted that, compared to non-orphaned learners, orphaned learners suffered severe psychological problems. Oyedele (2016) points

out in this regard that problems experienced by orphans at school are, in all likelihood, caused by the challenges they face in their lives. In addition, orphaned learners fail to perform well because their teachers used the lecture method of teaching in their classes, a lack of classroom management as well as inadequate educational facilities for an effective teaching and learning process in the class (Makuria 2015). Similar to this assertion of Makuria (2015) is that of Tu (2009). Tu (2009) investigated the school performance and school behaviour of orphans and vulnerable learners and found out that orphaned learners were disadvantaged in respect of their school performance in comparison to their peers from the same community but who not orphans were. Based on the reports of both learners and educators, orphaned learners achieved the lowest academic marks in the classroom. The study further indicated that, from the teachers' perspective, the educational expectations of orphaned learners were significantly lower than those of non-orphaned learners. Based on interpretation of his study's data, Tu (2009) contended that orphaned learners were significantly more likely to demonstrate aggressive, impulsive and anxious behaviours than non-orphaned learners. Further to this, as he noted, orphans often experience learning difficulties. Accordingly, he suggested that all education stakeholders should pay more attention to influencing the school performance and behaviour of orphaned learners.

As revealed in the paragraphs above donations for orphaned learners and concerted efforts from all stakeholders should ensure that the educational needs of orphans are met. Nuru (2015) maintains that, if the basic and educational needs of orphaned learners are met, this creates a learning environment that is conducive for those learners whose parents have died to live and study in. It has also been found that orphaned learners who grow up in orphanages face a number of challenges in class, but that motivation and counselling them improves their behaviour and that they subsequently enjoy working with educators and other learners. It was, therefore, concluded that the role of an educator includes both

educating and providing learners with pastoral care. In addition, it is also concluded that the sound management of orphanages may have a positive impact on the academic performance of the orphaned learners as it helps to create a conducive environment for living and learning and, hence, the good performance based on the report from learners and educators in Nuru's (2015) study. Accordingly, the researcher recommends that the government should assist the orphanages in their providing for the daily basic needs of orphans.

In her study of relevant literature, the researcher noted the powerful and significant role orphanages can play in the lives and schooling of orphans. Specifically, Nuru (2015) recommends that the establishment of orphanage centres be encouraged and that orphanages be built in all communities. Nuru (2015) notes that such centres assist orphan learners primarily with accommodation and the other privileges that accompany the provision of accommodation.

2.4 Resilience and the academic performance of orphan learners

According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, all children have rights, including the right to education. Before a child is old enough to attend school, the child's basic needs such as the need for food must be met, and the child must be cared for. Makhonza (2006) highlights that orphaned learners often come home to an empty house after school with no one to cook for them. In addition, they have no one with whom to share both the positive and negative experiences that they may have had at school. This may possibly be a reason why Chala, in 2002, titled his newspaper article "Children do it themselves". In the article he wrote about a certain principal and his school that "has about 60 orphans and most of them are learners whose parents died either of AIDS related diseases or just natural death" (Chala 2002). Chala (2002) illuminated in the article the stress and sacrifices which learners experience, on their own and without assistance from anyone, in order to remain at school.

An understanding of the factors impacting on the academic performance of orphans at school may assist communities and educators to support these orphans and help them to develop resilience in the face of the challenges they encounter. As mentioned above, academic performance is defined as the outcome of student's study at the end of a given period (Potokri 2012), while a study by Palmary and Moat (2002) described resilience in the context of education as the ability of young people to survive and succeed (make successful adaptations despite exposure to high risk conditions). Victor (2003) describes resilience in this context as a quality that assists learners to overcome difficulties, as well as challenging and even dangerous situations, and become caring, competent and confident. Thus, the concept of resilience in the context of this study refers to the ability of learners to develop to their full potential even if their parents are deceased.

An understanding of academic performance and resilience makes it possible to identify factors influencing academic performance that should assist communities and educators in assisting orphans to improve their academic performance. Resilience is an important skill needed by all vulnerable children, including orphaned learners, to cope with the harsh reality of their schooling experiences and life in general (Pooley & Cohen 2010 in Motsa & Morojele 2017). Accordingly, vulnerable children's propensities and abilities to be naturally resilient, and the support they receive, helps them to overcome challenges in their lives. Motsa and Morajele 's study revealed that the vulnerable children's (including orphans) resilient abilities can be inculcated by affirming their voice, and helping them have a sense of belonging and self-efficacy with a strong understanding of the strengths they possess to engage with their trying situations. A critical point of emphasis is that, whatever could be imagined or done about resilience.

The development of resilience in orphaned learners may mean a more positive attitude when being supported by educators, foster care parents and the community at large. Scientific evidence has shown that the development of resilience offers hope, and may assist many if not all those orphaned learners who experience

stress, trauma and risks in their lives to overcome these difficulties. Educators may thus be challenged to focus more on the strengths of learners than on their weaknesses (Henderson & Vlasten 1996). In addition, it resilience should also help their caregivers who have been given the responsibility to support and take care of the orphaned learners after the death of their loved ones, to impart dreams and vision to these orphaned learners. Furthermore, resilience should help the orphaned learners to continue to hope and believe that something good may come out of their schooling despite the death of their parents. Resilience is often associated with good academic performance, as a learner under stress tends to perform poorly in the absence of resilience (Makhonza 2006:14). A learner who has undergone a traumatic experience, i.e. the death of a parent, often suffers stress long before the death of the parent. The child will first become aware that the parent is infected or is ill and will start to worry about siblings, money, school etc. It is, therefore, to be expected that under these circumstances, the child will perform poorly. It is for these reasons that the researcher deemed it appropriate to use academic performance as a measure of resilience as a traumatised person rarely performs at his/her expected level.

The study by Prayor and Rodgers (2001) argues that the loss of a parent(s) introduces a major change into the life of a learner. This change may involve moving from a middle or upper class, urban home to the rural home of a poor relative. It may involve separation from siblings which often arbitrarily when the orphaned learners are divided among relatives without due consideration of their needs. It may also mean the end of a learner's opportunity for education because of a lack of school fees. Those learners who choose not to move or who may not have any relatives with whom they may live may be forced to live on their own, thus constituting child-headed families. All these changes would obviously affect not only the physical but also the psychological well-being of an orphaned learner with the changes posing new demands and constraints in the learner's life.

Grotberg (2003) posits that resilience is a key factor in children's ability to cope with and survive adversity. Grotberg (2003) also highlights that some studies have even indicated that learners may benefit both socially and psychologically if they are exposed to difficult circumstances. Resilience is defined as an ability to overcome hardships in life (Malindi 2014, Ungar 2005). Hence, a resilient learner is a learner who strives for a better life and remains effective and proficient even in the most difficult circumstances (Malindi 2014). Resilience is also said to refer to the capacity to face challenges and to become more capable despite adverse experiences (Ncamsile 2017). People who display resilient adaptation often become stronger by learning new skills and developing creative ways of coping with and overcoming life changes. Resilience is an important skill which all orphaned learners require if they are to cope with the harsh reality of schooling and life in general (Ncamsile 2017).

The views of the researchers cited above imply that the more the challenges, the more people become strong and wise if they are resilient. Being an orphan should be seen as a challenge to overcome and not as a problem because when an orphaned learner regards it as a problem, he/she will, in all likelihood, be unsuccessful, feeling that life is over impact negatively on the orphan's academic performance. In an article on resilience, Benard (1991) described a resilient child as one who loves well, works well, plays well and expects well. The article further indicates that such learners usually demonstrate four attributes, namely, social competence, problem solving, autonomy and a sense of purpose and a future. In the same article, the researcher comments as follows: "Whether or not those attributes are strong enough within the individual to help that person bounce back from adversity depends on certain protective factors in his or her life" (Benard 1991). This assertion is confirmed by the study of Palmary and Moat (2002) in which resilience in young people is described as their ability to survive and succeed (make successful adaptations despite exposure to high-risk conditions).

In the course of reviewing the works of the writers cited in this paragraph, the researcher noted that there appeared to be a link between a resilient learner and his/her ability to achieve academically. In general, learners who are facing adversity are considered resilient if they are able to function, within the normal or acceptable bounds, on measures of competence with respect to behavioural, social and/or cognitive functioning (Kinard 1998). A study by Miller (1999) on racial socialisation and racial identity as factors that may promote resiliency in African American adolescents mentions that both racial socialisation and racial identity protect urban African American adolescents against some of the harmful effects of a discriminatory environment.

Resilience factors are usually hypothesised as influencing academic performance. Academic performance may be regarded as an indicator of resiliency and has, in fact, long been considered in many studies (e.g. Barbarin 1993; Bowman & Howard 1985) as signifying resiliency among adolescents. In this study, as in Bowman and Howard's study, which used academic achievement to describe the resilience of orphaned learners, academic performance was used to indicate the resilience of orphaned learners. In his study on parental influence on the academic achievement of learners, Mdanda (1999) mentioned that in assisting learners who are orphans, it is important that the focus be on those learners who are achieving despite their parents' deaths. Jubber (1994) found that there is an association between school performance and the parental structure, with children who lived with both parents being found to perform better academically compared to their counterparts living with either one or no parents. "The single parent and any other type of parental structure affect school performance more negatively than does the two parental structures" (Jubber, 1994). The above studies suggest that orphans may be at risk, i.e. when their parents die and their family structures changes, as this exposes them to the risk of academic problems.

The findings of Motsa and Morejele's 2017 study revealed the deep-rooted resilience, agency and perseverance displayed by the vulnerable children in their

daily struggles to negotiate and traverse even the worst conditions of their educational life. A sense of hope and optimism, a deeply-held belief that education is the only viable alternative that could alleviate their plight and life challenges in the future (Sutton et al 2007) seemed to have been a catalyst behind the vulnerable children's display of agency towards resilience. The findings illustrate that even though the vulnerable children's lived experiences were challenging, they were able to utilise their human capital agency to deal completely with threats to their education (Ungar 2008) and by extension their visualised future lives. They relentlessly continued with their education because they were motivated by the assurance of a better future, seeing that education and educational achievement is the key component for personal and social development (Sutton et al 2007). Children's assertive personalities seemed to have played a significant role in nurturing their hidden resilience (Ungar 2007), thereby affirming children as creative, active social agents and the unique individuality of every child (Van Blerk 2005).

2.5 Causes of poor academic performance

According to the national survey report (MOLSA UNICEF 2003), orphaned learners face a number of social problems, including discrimination, sexual abuse, neglect and labour exploitation by their relatives and neighbours. Orphaned learners growing up with extended families face challenges and deprivations such as a lack of food, a home and money, serious threats to their education because of poverty, a high risk of being sexually abused by relatives, child labour and the possibility of living a life on the streets (Nielson 2004).

Studies on the academic performance of orphaned learners show that orphaned children in Rwanda are voiceless, unable to play a part in the society as a whole and believe that they are powerless to change their lot. Orphans often feel excluded from their communities, which neither acknowledge nor fulfil their need for love, sanctuary and recognition (Machellan 2005). Likewise, the literature shows that children, for example orphans who live in difficult circumstances in Ethiopia, are more likely to

multifaceted social, economic, legal and psychological problems as compared to other children (MOLSA 2004). According to Sc/Sweden (2003:7), a study on HIV/AIDS orphans in Addis Ababa found that orphaned children faced various forms of abuse such as physical violence, sexual violence, dismissal from home and verbal abuse by their relatives, caregivers and neighbours, with the lack of social protection increasing their vulnerability to abuse and the risk of exploitation. They are often forced to live on the streets and may resort to prostitution and/or crime in order to survive (Dennis et al 2002:9). The above problems show that the low level of awareness of society often results in orphans having to face numerous problems which impact negatively on their academic performance in this competitive, contemporary world.

According to Legesse (2015:10), orphaned learners often drop out of due to their burden and a lack of security. UNICEF (2004) reviewed the effect of being orphaned and child labour on schooling in twenty sub-Saharan African countries. In the majority of these countries, orphaned learners, whose ages ranged from five to 14, were less likely to be in school and more likely to be working more than 40 hours a week compared to their non-orphaned counterparts. Coombe (2001:12) revealed that the number of orphaned learners that are forced to drop out of school or be absent from school on a regular basis was on the increase. Enrolment retention, transition and completion rates at all educational levels are expected to fall as a direct result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which is leading to lack of a resources, low levels of literacy and dysfunctional behaviours.

A study in Uganda has shown that the chance of children going to school is reduced by half in the event of the death of one or both parents and that this causes psychological trauma, which then negatively affects their school performance (UNAIDS 2001:20). Based on a Human Right Watch (HRW 2001:2–20) study, of the HIV/AIDS orphans interviewed and reported on in Kenya, some had to stay at home after a parent had become ill with AIDS, while some had been subject to abuse. As a result, they were not able to concentrate on

their learning in classes because they were worried about both their current and their future lives (UNAIDS 2001:30). The researcher agrees that parental death has an adverse effect on the surviving children, including on their academic performance. Children who have lost their parents often face problems such as their not being not able to attend their classes. In particular, if their mothers, as the children's primary caregivers, die and leave their children alone, the children's survival may be threatened. As a result, educational challenges are observed such as a decline in school enrolment, an increase in the school dropout rate and a gradual increase in absenteeism. Preliminary results of a study of dropout in Tanzania showed that the death of parents resulted in lower school enrolment as well as labour exploitation among children (UNICEF & UNAIDS 2002). The orphan problem in Brazil, China, Russia and throughout Africa is the consequence of deep-seated poverty and inequality. However, this problem is exacerbated by inappropriate global research. The hard truth is that data alone is not enough to address the phenomenon. Policies and programmes waste crucial resources at the expense of the children's wellbeing.

A study conducted in Cameroon, Zambia, Swaziland, Kenya and other sub-Saharan Africa countries revealed that the HIV/AIDS pandemic had resulted in an economic deterioration of 25% in these countries over 20 years (Gachuhic 1999). More than 115 million children aged 6 to 12, of which two-thirds are girls; do not attend school in these developing countries. By 2015, it is estimated 191 countries in the world will achieve primary education. Of the 191 countries, 31 are among the 55 countries which are severely affected by HIV/AIDS (World Bank 2002). Schools can play a crucial role in improving the prospects and securing the futures of children who have been orphaned for various reasons. A good school education provides children with higher self-esteem as well as better job prospects and economic independence than would otherwise have been the case. Sadly, however, there has been a substantial decrease in the secondary school participation of those learners whose mothers have died or who have a low baseline academic performance (Evans & Miguel 2007). Case, Pason and Ableidinger (2004) used 19 demographic

and health surveys (DHS) collected across ten sub-Saharan African countries between 1992 and 2000 to estimate the impact of parental death on school enrolment by comparing orphan and non-orphan children in the households that take in orphans. They found out that the orphans were significantly less likely to be enrolled in school than the non-orphans were, even from the same households were.

However, another study conducted in rural Zimbabwe found no difference between the primary school completion rates of orphans and non-orphans, although maternal orphans were less likely to complete primary school education than non-orphans (NyaMukapa & Gregson 2008). Moreover, Ainsworth and Filmer (2002) argue that there is significant heterogeneity across countries in terms of the effect of orphanhood on schooling, although in some countries orphans were more likely to be in school than non-orphans.

Rubaha (2008) points out that neglect, abuse, lack of parental love, lack of food, high labour demand at home and being stigmatised at school because of the lack of school uniforms and learning materials, to mention but a few, are some of the challenges facing orphaned learners. Kafwa (2005) argues that, compared to non-orphans, orphaned learners are more likely to be malnourished, to drop out of school and to have limited access to health and social services as well as being vulnerable to exploitation. These challenges create emotional stress, thus making it difficult for the learners to concentrate and learn in the classroom as a result of the trauma they are experiencing. Hewlett (2006) argues that motivation is the main driver of learning. However, in view of the fact the lack basic needs of orphans, such as the love of parents, adequate shelter and food and clothes, are often not meet, they are often less motivated than their non-orphaned counterparts to perform well in class. Bettman (2006) points out that millions of learners experience poverty, enormous mental stress from witnessing the illness and death of their loved ones and a profound sense of insecurity.

Oyedele's 2016 study revealed an estimated orphan population of 50 000 as a direct

result of AIDS in Zimbabwe. This suggests that it would not be possible for such a number of orphans to be accommodated in their extended families. The study also supported the notion that the African traditional and social structures which enabled the extended family to immediately adopt a child who has lost his/her parents have been severely disrupted, thus leaving orphans seriously exposed to hardships which would impact adversely on their academic performance.

Kolthari (2012) argues that one of the major factors affecting orphaned learners is their access to the child grant. Although every child is entitled to a child grant in South Africa, many orphans and vulnerable children do not have the correct paperwork in place in order to access it. According to Griffiths (2005), childcare advocates work with the families to ensure both their access to their grants and also that they understand their rights. Keeping the orphans in education is also a key role of the childcare advocates. However, Children on the Brink (2010) notes that, as compared to non- orphaned learners, orphaned learners are more likely to live in temporary households, moving from place to place and disrupting their schooling. In addition, they are often in need of additional support to cope with the emotional demands arising from the loss of their parents. There is a high probability that orphaned learners will not attend school or will miss school and, hence, it is vital for the childcare advocates ensure that orphaned learners maintain consistency in respect of their schooling and that their educational needs are met (Lesege 2015).

Childcare advocates have access to hardship funds to provide the orphaned learners with school uniforms. It is also incumbent on them to work closely with the schools to monitor the orphans' education and emotional needs. Sadly, as Maguwe (2012) highlights, many orphans are at risk of abuse by both family members and locals in the community as they are seen as easy targets. Rape and sexual violence among orphans is on the rise in South Africa and is fuelled by the increasing levels of poverty. The childcare advocates follow the cases of children who have been raped; they report the cases the police and follow the cases through to conviction.

It is therefore clear, in light of the problems and insights discussed thus far in this

chapter, that the governments of poor countries face a huge challenge in confronting these problems. The purpose of this study was to examine the major factors that affect the academic performance of orphan learners in the Shamavunga Circuit, Mopani District in Limpopo by comparing and contrasting these factors with the problems identified in the relevant studies referred to in this chapter in order to gain a deeper understanding of the major factors influencing the academic performance of the orphans in the school under study.

2.6 The role of teachers and their duty to take care of orphaned learners to improve their academic performance

Section 24 of the Constitution states that everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to his/her health and wellbeing. This implies that orphaned learners have a constitutional right to receive education in a safe school environment (RSA 1994), even if their parents are deceased. Their guardians and caregivers entrust them, both psychologically and physically, to the care of educators during school hours. It is important to note that orphaned learners are in need of mental and psychological protection because they are particularly vulnerable in view of their being underage. Thus, in view of their low level of maturity, they need to be protected against injury and other hazards (Ramare 2016). There is no need for the educators to use verbal abuse to remind the orphaned learners that they are orphans. It is the duty of educators to act in loco parentis – “in the place of a parent”. The educator’s duty of care stems from a special relationship of trust between the educator and the learner, and the obligation to take control of any danger, which may threaten the learner (Oosthuizen 2005).

The frequent inability of orphaned learners to attend school regularly contributes to their poor academic performance (Ramare 2016). Ramare (2016) highlights that it is incumbent on educators to adopt appropriate strategies that meet the needs of orphaned learners who are absent from school and to take into account their developmental stages. In addition, they should accommodate the orphaned learners

who are absent when planning and presenting lessons and also analyse the strengths and the weaknesses of these learners. The educators should not only provide academic support and tutoring across the curriculum but they should also give personal support to and encourage the orphaned learners (Ramare 2016). The duty of care means that educators assume the responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of the orphaned learners for as long as the orphaned learners are in their care. In the case of orphaned learners, the duty of care may go beyond what is legally expected of educators who should also accept some of the responsibilities that are usually those of the parents. Educators are expected to develop caring relationships with orphaned learners and to put these relationships into practice (Smedley & Pepperell 2010).

According to Taukeni's 2011 study in Namibia, the types of psychological support provided by primary schools to orphaned learners in meeting their emotional, social, physical and spiritual needs include informing learners about bereavement, consoling orphaned learners, provision of group guidance, peer support, provision of safety and security, provision of educational incentives, school feeding programmes and the provision of textbooks and stationery. Orphaned learners received other types of support from home namely: provision of school uniform, school fees, social grants, pocket money and support with schoolwork at home. Orphaned learners also received support through prayer and biblical readings at home. Based on these findings, Taukeni's (2011) study concludes that even though orphaned learners were provided with all this support, it did not help them to adjust their loss. The researcher is of the view that although Taukeni 2011 maintains that the support offered orphaned learners did not help them, it is another factor that may improve the academic performance of orphaned learners.

2.7 Effects of orphanhood on learners

In this section three of the effects of orphanhood are presented, namely, the psychological impact of orphanhood, including issues such as grieving and

bereavement; the significance of losing parents and the accompanying emotional impact; as well as the socioeconomic impact of parental death.

2.7.1 The psychological impact of orphanhood

- Grieving, mourning and bereavement

Childhood grief is “one of the society’s most chronically painful yet most underestimated phenomena”, states Comfort Zone founder, Lynne Hedges, who lost both parents before the age of thirteen. She maintains that she is concerned that educators, doctors and the clergy are not receiving sufficient training to help them to recognise signs of loneliness, isolation and depression in grieving learners who lose their parents during their childhood (Zaslow 2010).

Learners experience the death of a parent(s) and the subsequent grieving process in various ways, depending on various factors such as their developmental stage, gender and surrounding environment and the availability of a strong support system (Smith 2009).

It is essential that both children and adults understand the fact that when faced with death it is important to ensure that they grieve fully. Like young children, teenagers and adults often struggle with accepting the reality of death. Intellectually, they may have a rational understanding of death but emotionally they may find it difficult to accept what they know to be true. It is, thus, not only children who struggle with death – adults do as well. However, children who do not yet understand these basic facts of death may have even more difficulty in coping with death than those who do. Understanding helps with acceptance. It is best not to assume that children know certain things about death based on their age and, instead, adults should ask them to talk about their ideas, thoughts and feelings. As we allow children to share their understanding about death with us, we will realise what concepts that they may need to help in understanding.

Each year children in school will be faced with the death of parents and they will

be forced to cope with loss while continuing their studies. How children express grief will vary according to their developmental level, their concept of death, and their ability to self-assess and express feelings through language. It is vital that educators and caregivers find a way to help the grieving learners by helping them to understand that we all grieve differently and also that grieving is not permanent and it will pass (Smith 2009).

There is no right or wrong way in which to grieve. The orphaned may experience a great deal of anger, the need for vengeance, and an ongoing sense of worry. Educators and caregivers should remember that it is difficult for learners to grieve and they should make every effort to support them in their grieving process (Gindis 2012).

- Loss of a parent and a child's self-concept

The social self-concept refers to the way in which people relate to the other people, while the transpersonal self-concept refers to the way in which people relate to the supernatural or the unknown. According to Balk (2009), the death of a parent is considered to be one of the most painful, if not most traumatic, experiences for a learner. When death occurs during adolescence, it complicates a learner's natural process of defining his/her identity in the world. The tension between seeking independence and reliance on family support tends to magnify the process of bereavement. In most cases, learners who are in mourning suffer from low self-esteem.

William Worden's study (2001) reveals that the difference in the levels of self-worth of bereaved versus non-bereaved learners is minimal one year after the death of a parent. On the second anniversary of a parent's death, however, the difference increases significantly with bereaved learners reporting much lower levels of self-esteem. Lowered self-esteem in bereaved teenagers is linked to behavioural problems, such as withdrawal from school activities, acts of aggression or acting out, and impaired academic performance in school. Bereaved

children also tend to suffer from increased levels of anxiety, depression and guilt. Some orphaned learners may become more entrenched in the family at a point in their lives when they need to individuate. In short, as Worden (2001) points out, a learner's self-esteem does not become clear until two years after the death of a parent(s).

2.7.2 The emotional impact of orphanhood

The emotional impact of orphanhood includes an inability to sustain emotion, that is, the children are limited in their capacity to tolerate pain over time and their sadness often occurs in bursts or while they are in class with other learners. Although childhood might differ for every human being and there are numerous interpretations of the concept, the early years of human life, which are marked by rapid growth and development, are common to all (Lyon 2006). Lyon (2006) points out that children also develop psychologically and in ways that define their intellectual, social, spiritual and emotional characteristics. In this regard, the researcher is reminded of Guest's (2001) study which found that the early loss of the significant caregiver may render children more susceptible to stress. In the adolescent, the death of a parent is associated with adverse effects such as an increase in later emotional problems, particularly susceptibility to depression (Sadock & Sadock 2003). Stress and depression may depreciate a learner's mental capacity, thus resulting in poor academic results.

2.7.3 Socioeconomic impact of orphanhood

- Family, home background and academic achievement

Family members rely on the family system to meet their individual and collective needs. According to Tumbul and Tumbul (2001), a family system has eight functions that must be fulfilled for the wellbeing of each member. These functions include affection, self-esteem, spiritual and economic needs, daily care, socialisation, recreation and education. It is imperative that each

family member make their contribution in order to promote a positive outcome. The absence of a parent though death will mean that most of these needs will not be met. It is also hypothesised that orphans are likely to be victims of discriminatory practices by the relatives who have been entrusted with their care (Sharma 2006). In some cases an extended family member, in particular, a grandmother, will resume parental responsibility after the death of her son or daughter. In such a case the children may be well catered for but, since the grandmother is old and, thus, likely to die, the children may be left without a guardian yet again (Armstrong 2005). The other challenge related to care by grandparents is that they are often emotionally drained as a result of losing their child but they are forced to become parents once more even with their emotional wounds and scars. Some do not even have enough time to mourn their children as they have to be strong for their grandchildren. This suggests that some of these children are being raised by emotionally impaired guardians. It may also happen that, in some cases after the death of the parents, the orphaned siblings are divided among their relatives.

2.7.4 Economic impact of orphanhood

In most cases, the parents are the financial providers in a family and thus their death may cause economic disruption, especially if they were the breadwinners. Such a situation may lead to poverty, overcrowding and a lack of the educational facilities necessary for learners (Magampa, 2014). In recognition of this situation, the government of South Africa, through the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), provides grants to the amount of R350 per child per month up to the age of eighteen. In order to qualify for a grant, the child's caregiver must earn R2900 or less per month, while a married couple should be earning R5800 jointly, and be a citizen of South Africa or a permanent resident. In some areas, especially in the rural areas, the access to grants is sometimes difficult since many orphans do not have the required documents. This might arguably impact on the schooling and, to

some extent, impact on the academic performance of learners, especially orphans.

The government of South African established the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) as part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme of the newly founded democratic Republic of South Africa with the aim of addressing several challenges among the poor, including orphaned learners. The NSNP provides food to learners at schools. At its inception, the programme provided food only to learners in primary school. However, the 2006 survey by the government's Fiscal and Finance Committee (South African Country Report: 2006) confirmed that there was a need to extend the programme to secondary schools. In October 2008, the Minister of Finance announced a budget for the inclusion of secondary schools in the programme. Evidence from Kenya, as Mwona (2015) notes, suggests that although teachers view the feeding scheme as useful the learners have a different view, as a report has shown that they felt they were not being served sufficient food at school. In this regard, Mwona (2015) pointed out that some schools in Kenya are trying to provide food parcels for orphaned learners to take home. This, in the researcher's view, implies that some orphans have no food to eat on their return home from school.

2.8 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that informed this study was based on two theories, namely, human need theory and critical emancipatory theory (CET).

2.8.1 Human need theory

Human need theory states that human needs, including those of children, are few, finite and constant in all cultures. According to human needs theory, everyone, including learners, have physical, emotional, social and intellectual needs that must be met if they are to enjoy life and develop to their full potential (Van Dyk 2005).

For learners, the absence of parents would therefore mean that their needs may not be met. This may result in, among other things, learners being academically unproductive. At this point, it is essential that the needs of learners, like those any other person, should be understood in the context of Abram Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This hierarchy of needs divides human needs into psychological, safety, belongingness, self-esteem and self-actualisation needs. These needs are hierarchically arranged such that the fulfilment of the lower needs propels the individual to the next level (Jerome 2013). All humans need to live in safe environments where their lives are not threatened. Learners have a greater desire than other human beings for this need to be fulfilled because they need to feel safe and secure. Love, friendship and comradeship are all included in the need for love, affection and belongingness. At this level the love of family and friends is important (Hendricks & Magano 2014). Parents are therefore, extremely important agents in meeting their children's overall needs and their absence would probably mean that their children's needs will remain unmet and, as a result, the children's academic performance may be affected. It is an essential human truth that we all want to belong to something (Daniels 2016).

2.8.2 Critical emancipatory theory (CET)

Jurgen Habermas is the principal modern theorist who has tried to evaluate the works of Marx and Weber on critical theory.

Critical emancipatory theorists operate on the assumption that people are the self-creators of their own history. They believe that a person has the potential of becoming whatever he/she so wishes to become as long as that person (orphan) is given the resources (educators and caregivers) to enable him/her to perform and achieve. In view of the fact that orphaned learners are said to be marginalised, CET was deemed to be relevant to the purposes of this study as it would inform the researcher about the learners' orphanhood mentality and their negative thinking in

terms of their inability to obtain good marks in their academic performance. The majority of orphaned learners regard education as difficult and intended for the non-orphaned learners who come from affluent homes. Literature confirms that orphanhood is a social challenge and, thus, CET was considered appropriate as it addresses issues such as empowerment in a context of inequality, oppression, dominion, suppression, alienation, power and transformation (Mertens 1998; Chilisa & Preece 2005).

In the context of education CET seeks to bring about independence from influences on individual learners, thus revealing some unjustified assumptions based on the understanding and interpretation of the experiences of individuals in this study the orphaned learners. However, in dealing effectively with the interpretation of the experiences of human behaviour or attitudes, an understanding of the influence of contextual factors forms the basis for interventions that result in the development of the decision-making skills required for meeting social challenges (Mthiyane 2015).

The researcher believes and anticipates that orphaned learners' situation with regard to schooling may be improved even without their parents. In addition, improved academic performance or achievement is in line with the assertions of CET, particularly where CET seeks to empower people to be self-confident because, when an individual is emancipated, the individual may be said to have been liberated. It is, therefore, possible that sincerity of purpose and commitment on the part of government, caregivers, grandparents and the community at large may assist in providing education. The fulfilment of this need, following Maslow's hierarchy of needs, would encourage orphaned learners to remain positive and motivated in their academic performance.

2.9 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed the existing literature on the academic performance of orphaned learners. The chapter also discussed the understanding of the concept of orphans, the academic performance of orphaned learners, resilience and the

academic performance of orphaned learners, the causes of poor academic performance, the role of educators and their duty of care towards orphaned learners in the interests of improving their academic performance. The socioeconomic aspects of orphanhood, which included, inter alia, home background and academic achievement, the social impact of orphanhood and the economic impact of orphanhood, were also discussed. In addition, the chapter elaborated on the psychological impact of orphanhood, for example grieving, mourning and bereavement, the loss of a parent and a child's self-concept, parental involvement and academic performance and the emotional impact of the loss of a parent. Lastly, theoretical perspectives on orphanhood were discussed. This discussion focused on human needs theories, Maslow's hierarchy of needs and critical emancipatory theory.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design, data collection and data analysis methods used in the study. The study population is described and the study sampling procedure explained. The qualitative methods used by the researcher are also explained. The chapter also discusses the ethical guidelines which were followed during the data collection stage of the study.

3.2 Research design and method

3.2.1 Research design

The researcher in this study used a descriptive and interpretive case study that was analysed using qualitative methods. Participant observation, face-to-face interviews and focus group interviews were used as data collection methods. A research design is a specific outline detailing how a chosen method will be applied to answer particular research questions. It also refers to the plan and the structure of the investigation undertaken to obtain the evidence required to answer the research question(s) (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:94).

In other words, a research design is a plan that guides the “arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure” (TerreBlance & Durrheim 1999:29).

3.2.2 Research method

Research methods are classified into three broad categories, namely, qualitative, quantitative and mixed design/approach (MacMillan & Schumacher 2010). The researcher used a qualitative method to conduct this study.

Crossman (2017) defines qualitative research as a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from this data in order to acquire a greater understanding of social life through the targeted populations. Crossman (2017) further indicated that qualitative research is typically focused on the micro-level of social life. The researcher in this study decided to use this research method as the aim of the study was to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivation and it was felt that the qualitative method would provide insights into the research problem and help in the formulation of ideas and/or hypotheses for potential quantitative research (Wyse 2011). In the course of finalising her choice of this method, the researcher noted that qualitative research involves the development of concepts which help researchers to understand social phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) settings by placing due emphasis on the meanings, experiences and views of the participants (Pope & Mays 2006:42–45).

Qualitative research focuses on the *quality* of things and on what their nature is, what they are like and how they may be described. It often involves the views or internal worlds of the participants, and may include data generated through the use of interviews, focus groups, etc. The researcher used the focus group, face to face interview and observation methods in this study. Qualitative research often gathers data from relatively small samples of people and may provide a 'micro' view of the issues that are being examined.

The qualitative method was chosen for the purposes of this study as the researcher preferred to use human beings who were teachers, guardians and orphaned learners in order to interview them on the issues relating to the academic performance of orphaned learners in the Shamavunga Circuit. The teachers, guardians and the orphaned learners were considered to be in a position to provide the rich data that was required to complete the scientific study under investigation.

The following features or characteristics of qualitative research, as outlined by Ngwenya (2002), applied to this study:

- Qualitative researcher often collects the required data in the field at the site where the participants are experiencing the issues or problem under study with the researchers have face -to-face interaction with the participants over time.
- Qualitative researchers collect the data themselves through examining relevant documents, observing behaviour and interviewing the participants.
- Qualitative researchers focus on the learning meaning that the participants ascribe to the problem in question and to relevant issues.
- Qualitative researchers are concerned primarily with the process, rather than with outcomes or product.
- The qualitative researcher is primarily an instrument for data collection.
- The qualitative researcher, who is the interviewer, works directly with the interviewees.
- Qualitative research interviews are both time consuming and resource intensive.
- Qualitative research interviews provide an opportunity for face-to-face interaction between two persons, thus reducing potential conflict.

The advantages of qualitative research methodology, as suggested by Houser (2009), further informed the researcher's choice of research method. The advantages of qualitative research include the following:

- Participants have the opportunity to elaborate on what they mean.

- The perceptions of the participants themselves are considered while they have flexibility in their responses to events or phenomena.
- Events may be seen in their proper context and more holistically than may otherwise have been the case.
- This research method is helpful in the initial exploration of individuals, events or phenomena.

3.3. Study population

A population is the larger group about which the researcher wishes to learn. Polit and Hungler (1999:37) refer to the population of a study as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. In this study all the secondary schools in the Shamavunga Circuit in the Mopani District, Limpopo province, South Africa were considered. Accordingly, the population for this study comprised educators working with orphaned learners, guardians living with these orphaned learners and orphaned learners enrolled in secondary schools in the Shamavunga Circuit in Mopani District, Limpopo province. The researcher considered this population appropriate because of the high number of orphaned learners in rural villages and communities such as the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo (Statistics South Africa 2013).

3.3.1 Sample and sampling method

A sample is a subset of a population selected to participate in a study and it is, thus, the fraction of the whole (Brink 1996:133; Polit & Hungler 1999:227). This study's sample comprised Grades 10 to 12 learners (10 orphaned learners: 5 males and 5 females), three guardians (1 male and 2 females) and three teachers (1 male and 2 females) from one of the high schools located in a rural setting in the Mopani District, Limpopo province. They were selected to provide the researcher with an opportunity to listen to their views on the academic performance of orphaned learners. The

researcher sampled guardians of the orphaned learners with the aim of that there are the ones that are taking care of orphans at home environment. According to Nkomo (2008: 77) study revealed that orphans receive their support from relatives after the death of their parents. These particular participants were sampled primarily because they were regarded as data rich resources who could best explain the concepts mentioned above. In order to arrive at this sample, the researcher used purposive sampling.

Sampling refers to the process of selection of a portion of the population to be studied (Nastasi 2016). William (2006) defines sampling as a process used to select units (e.g. people, organisations) from a population of interest so that, by studying the sample, the researcher may fairly generalise the results back to the population from the sample was chosen. Terreblanche and Durrheim (1999:44) define sampling as a technique that involves decisions about the people, settings, events, behaviours and social processes to observe.

The sampling used in this study, namely, purposeful sampling, is a technique which is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information rich cases to ensure the most effective use of limited resources (Patton 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or have experienced of the phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark 2011). It is hoped that the knowledge and experiences of the participants will mean that they are available and willing to participate, and that they possess the ability to communicate their experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner. The reason why purposive sampling was adopted for the purposes of this study was because the researcher's aim was to select information-rich cases, with the objective of obtaining insight into and understanding of the phenomenon under study. In the view of the fact that the researcher was exploring the academic performance of orphaned learners and their perceptions, orphaned learners, their educators and their guardians were selected purposefully with the intention of deriving a deep understanding of the phenomenon under study.

3.3.2 Limitation

Due to financial constraints the researcher chose one school in a rural setting which was closely located to the researcher's place of work to facilitate the data collection process as it would be easy for the researcher to travel to the research site. This choice was also informed by the fact that there was not very much time in which to conduct the interviews as the data had to be collected during the third term in line with the permission granted by the Limpopo Department of Education and which stipulated that interviews were not to be conducted during the fourth term when learners write their final examination.

3.4 Data collection

Mohangi (2015) explains data collection as "ongoing, cyclical and interactive (non-linear) process joined together and not separated. This means that, as the data collected and analysed, should the need arise to conduct follow-up interviews in order to strengthen the study; the researcher is able to do so. Polit and Hungler (1999:267) define data as the information obtained in the course of a study. In this study the requisite data was collected by using face –to –face interview, focus group and observation. The structured interview schedule was used in order to capture data relevant to the study objectives and the research questions. The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of educators and learners of the academic performance of orphaned learners at secondary schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo province.

Data collection involves systematic techniques that the researcher employs to gather the information required in the study and is a sequential, step by step phase in a research study. Before the collection of the data, the researcher negotiated entry from the gate-keepers. These gate-keepers included the Head of the Education Department, the circuit manager and the principal of the school. The researcher applied for and was granted permission to visit the selected school by the Provincial

Department of Education and the relevant circuit (see Appendices B and C) respectively. With this approval to conduct the research, the researcher then visited the school which had been selected in order to seek permission to use the school as a research site (Appendix D). It was only after being granted permission by the principal to conduct the study in her school that the researcher consulted the guardian and educator participants and made individual appointments with them (Appendix E) with a view to conducting one-on-one interviews and focus-group interview with the orphaned learner participants. Having agreed to be interviewed, the participants were all requested to sign the consent form (Appendix F) and attached as Appendix E.

3.4.1 Observations

Myers and Avison (2002) describe observation as having its roots in anthropological studies, where researchers would travel to faraway places to study the customs and practices of lesser known societies. In the research context observation involves participating in a situation while, at the same time, recording what is being observed. The researcher in this study used participant observation. This type of observation has been associated primarily with qualitative methods as the data collected using this technique tends to be predominantly qualitative and offer an opportunity to obtain unique insights into the organisation or social group under study. According to Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999), observation is used as a data collection method for the following reasons:

- To identify and guide relationships with the informants.
- To help the researcher to get the feel for the way in which phenomenon are organised and prioritised, how people interrelate, and what the cultural parameters are.
- It reduces the incident of “reactivity” or people acting in a certain way when they are aware that they are being observed.

- It is the right way in which to collect the right data for the study.
- It gives the researcher better understanding of what is happening in the culture of the participants.

Bradley (2009) indicated that observation is a strategy that many qualitative researchers use to acquire a comprehensive understanding of an event or phenomenon. The following advantages, as listed by Bradley (2009), convinced the researcher to use observation as a data collection method:

- Qualitative observational methods allow the researcher to capture both the overt and the subtle factors of the research setting and allow the researcher to see and record how the participants interact with the physical environment, for example, the classroom.
- Qualitative observational methods allow the researcher to witness a totality of a human dynamics within a group.
- Using observational methods, the researcher is able to see the behaviours that, when viewed in context may reveal important information about the participants or group relative to the research topic.
- Qualitative observational method affords researchers the opportunity to see the entire picture and to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in question.

The researcher conducted observation in the classroom to ascertain how the teachers interacted with the orphaned learners during lessons. The researcher made notes on how the teaching and learning took place as well as how the orphaned learners participated in the lessons. The researcher also observed in order to ascertain whether the teachers were giving enough attention to all the learners, including the orphans. The researcher stated that observation enabled her to become acquainted with the orphans in both the classroom and the school environment that

she observed.

3.4.2 In-depth interviews and individual interviews

In the research context an interview is a two way conversation in which the interviewer asks the interviewee questions in order to collect data and learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the interviewee (Maree 2007:87; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Based on the purpose of the study, one-on-one (face-to-face), in-depth, semi-structured interview during which open ended questions were asked, were conducted in order to elicit the views and opinions of the participants (educators and guardians) and to investigate and understand their perceptions regarding the performance of orphaned learners in their school and in their homes.

The educators from the sampled school and the guardians of the orphaned learners were interviewed as individuals in order to inform the researcher on relevant data as per the interview guide. The purpose of conducting face-to-face interviews is to explore people's responses, thus gathering more and deeper information than may otherwise have been the case (McMillan & Schumacher 2011: 363). In this study the researcher sought more and deeper information to complement the other information that may be obtained using the other data collection method, which is the focus group interview. The researcher, ensured that the participants felt comfortable and respected throughout the entire interview process. The researcher did not allow the presence of a stranger at the interviews as this was an emotional study and it was felt that the presence of a complete stranger may have discouraged the participants from divulging personal or emotional information.

The researcher interviewed the educator participants after school hours during study at the school and the guardians at their homes. In cases in which the use of English was a problem, for example, in the case of guardians being interviewed, the interviews were conducted in the guardians' own languages so as to enable the researcher to

understand the challenges the guardians were facing in raising orphaned learners and ensure that, despite the challenges, the orphaned learners performed well academically.

The interviews were tape recorded verbatim for analysis purposes using a personal computer and a Huawei cell phone as a backup. The participants were asked to answer a set of predetermined questions.

3.4.3 Focus group interviews

A focus group interview is a semi-structured group that addresses a specific topic or experience that is familiar to the members of the group (Whitley 2002:380).

According to Babbie (2008:338), a focus group refers to a group of subjects interviewed together, thus prompting a discussion. The researcher used focus group interviews in order to collect the requisite data. The focus group interviews ensured that the participants provided rich data. The focus group interview used in this study comprised focus group conversations. MacMillan and Schumacher (2010:363) maintain that focus groups have the potential of enabling the researcher to obtain a better understanding of the problem than may otherwise have been the case. Based on information gleaned from the UNISA Masters and Doctorate Workshop, held at Unisa, Polokwane, from 7 to 10 April, 2015, and facilitated by Professor M. Lekhetso, the researcher realised that focus group interviews would provide all the participants in the group the opportunity to voice their views.

In line with Krueger's (1998:22) assertions, the researcher considered the use of focus group interview because of the method's following advantages:

- Participants can feed off each other as they respond to each other's comments.
- Participants can support or disagree with one another, thus creating more energy and generating more data.

- The focus group may uncover the participants' perceptions, attitude and experiences more easily than a quantitative survey.
- The cost of a focus group is often relatively low while it provides quick results.
- Participants may be more comfortable talking into a group than in an individual interview.

In particular, the focus group interview was deemed suitable for the purpose of this study in that the research topic was extremely sensitive. It was felt that the participants would feel more comfortable and less emotional being interviewed with other participants who were in the same situation of dealing with orphanhood than if they had been interviewed on their own.

The focus group interviews comprised three discussion groups of orphaned learners with at least three orphaned learners making up the respective groups. The interview records that were used included field notes, voice recordings as well as illustration/clarify detail of the interview data. The local social worker was requested to deal with the orphaned learners who became emotionally disturbed during the interviews.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Research ethics deal with what is wrong and what is right in the carrying out of research. This, in turn, that all research should be ethical (Wisker 2008). Potokri (2012) asserts that the researcher is the coordinator of all research, from the pre-research to the final writing of the research reports. The following ethical considerations were taken into account in this research study.

3.5.1 Permission and approval from the participants

The researcher sought approval to conduct the study from the Department of

Education and the Shamavunga Circuit in the form of written documents (See appendix B and C) before entering the field/selected school. Before commencing the data collection process the researcher sought permission from both the school and the participants (see Appendix D and Appendix E).

3.5.2 Voluntary participation and informed consent

Informed consent refers to a voluntary agreement to participate in research. It is not merely a form that is signed but is also a process in terms of the subject understands the research and its potential risks. The goal of the informed consent process is to provide sufficient information to enable the participants to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate in a study or to continue with their participation (Dalar, Jennifer, Aburto & Susan 2009).

Before commencing the study, the researcher sought the consent of the participants. The participants were all informed that their participation in the study was free and voluntary. They were requested to sign a consent form (see Appendix F) that indicated their understanding of the study, their free choice to participate in the study, as well as their freedom to withdraw the study at any time if they so wished.

3.5.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity in the context of research means that the participants' identity will not be revealed while confidentiality means that the participant will never be linked to the data they provide (Crow & Wiles 2008).

The researcher assured participants of both confidentiality and anonymity in the sense that their names as well as that of the school would not be disclosed in the research report (this dissertation).

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

According to Pope and Mays (2006), data analysis refers to the techniques used to store information that needs to be summarised, described and analysed. The information in a qualitative data analysis may be generated by interviews, observation and/or focus group discussion(s). In line with the assertions of Pope and Mays (2006), the researcher disclosed that she was intimately involved in the data analysis process and not aloof from it. In light of this, the process presented below was taken into consideration:

- Familiarisation with the data through review, reading, listening, etc.
- Transcription of tape recorded material.
- Organisation and indexing of data for easy retrieval and identification.
- Anonymising of sensitive data.

For the purpose of this study the researcher used the content analysis method. According to Bowen (2009:32), content analysis may be defined as “the process of organising information into codes and categories related to the central questions of research”. The researcher transcribed the data which had been gathered from the tape recordings to identify similarities and differences in the data in order to develop the codes used for the interpretation purposes.

3.6.1 Preparing the data for analysis

The data in this study was derived from the interviews, participants’ observation and focus group discussion. This data was transcribed verbatim (after the researcher had listened to it several times) from the audiotape and then coded. This was done after the researcher had read and reread the raw data from the interviews. After comparing the data from the interviews, observation and focus group discussion the researcher coded the data with the view to forming categories and sub-categories.

3. 6.2 Coding as a data analysing technique

Maree (2007:107) identifies two types of coding, namely, inductive and priori coding. Cole (1988:53–57) defines content analysis as a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages. When developing the codes in this study the researcher used priori coding (predetermined codes) as a way of analysing the data. The researcher had developed the codes before the examination of the data which had been collected. The researcher derived the codes from the research questions. The responses from the transcribed interviews were grouped according to the questions asked per the interview schedule and which had been informed by the research questions. The codes were grouped into categories and sub-categories and these categories and sub-categories were then used as headings and sub-headings when the researcher interpreted the data.

3.7 Trustworthiness of the study

Trustworthiness in the research context refers to the conceptual soundness in terms of which the value of qualitative research may be judged. In qualitative research trustworthiness, which is further divided into credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Lincoln & Guba 2005), will be ensured through cross checking the analysis of the interview data.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the accuracy with which the researcher interprets the data provided by the participants (Du Plooy & Cilliers 2014:258). In this study the participants were given an opportunity to review, validate and verify the researcher's interpretations to ensure that the researcher had not misconstrued the information provided (see Brink 2012:127). In order to ensure the credibility of the study, the researcher conducted member-checking with the participants.

3.7.2 Dependability

Dependability is used to establish the trustworthiness of the study and to audit the research process (Brink 2012:127). The researcher audits the process and records and retains the documents relating to what has been done in an investigation. In this study the researcher's promoter was contacted and requested to review the research plan and process.

3.7.3 Conformability

According to Rangongo (2011:87), conformability refers to the degree to which the research findings are the focus of the inquiry and not the result of researcher bias. In other words, the conformability of a study guarantees that the findings, conclusions and recommendations are supported by the data which has been collected and analysed.

3.7.4 Participant language and verbatim accounts

The researcher obtained verbatim statements from the participants during the interviews and also interpreted her observation. This was done by recording the exact responses of the participants and by using direct quotes from the participants when analysing the data in order to reinforce the trustworthiness of the study.

3.8 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the research design, research methodology, sampling and data collection approaches used in the study. The chapter also discussed qualitative research methods at length as well as data collection methods including the interview. In addition, the chapter elaborated on the steps taken in the study to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This study aimed to investigate the perceptions of educators, guardians and orphaned learners of the academic performance of orphaned learners at secondary schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo province. The focus of the study was on one school.

This chapter contains a detailed account of the collection of data from the research participants. It also serves to prepare the reader with regard to the form of grounding of the research and its stance by locating it within the qualitative research paradigm. In short, the chapter highlights the data that was collected and then analysed.

4.2 Data analysis

The study used the qualitative method to collect the requisite data. According to De Vos et al (2002), it is essential that the researcher transcribe and analysed the interviews as soon as possible after they have been concluded. The researcher listened to the recorded data over and over again, transcribed the data and then coded it. The coding of the data from the interviews and narratives then resulted in the emergence of themes and subthemes. Wyse (2011) argues that qualitative research is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations. It also provides insights into a problem or helps in the development of ideas, thereby uncovering trends in thoughts and opinions so as to enable the researcher to further penetrate the problem. Devos (2014) points out that qualitative data provides qualitative researchers with rich information about the social processes in specific settings. The qualitative component of this study focused on the educators of orphaned learners, the guardians of these learners as well the orphaned learners themselves.

4.3 Data analysis and procedure

The data were collected from one sampled school located in one of the rural areas in the Shamavunga Circuit, Mopani District and then analysed. Three educators and three guardians of orphaned learners participated in in-depth interviews while ten orphaned learners (5 boys and 5 girls) participated in focus group interviews. The local social worker was also requested to assist during the interviews in order to deal with any emotions that may have surfaced in the participants as the focus of the study was the sensitive issue of orphaned learners. The data which had been collected was organised into five themes as well as sub-themes in accordance with the questions posed during the interviews.

4.3.1 Participants

Table 4.1: Identification of participants

SCHOOL, EDUCATORS AND GUARDIANS	Participants
SCHOOL Educators	Educator 1, Educator 2 and Educator 3
SCHOOL Learners	Learner A, Learner B, Learner C, Learner D, Learner E, Learner F, Learner G, Learner H, Learner I and Learner J
Guardians	Guardian 1, Guardian 2 and Guardian 3

As shown in table above, the educator participants were identified as Educator 1, Educator 2 and Educator 3. The guardians of the orphaned learners were also provided with identification codes, namely, Guardian 1, Guardian 2 and Guardian 3 while the orphaned learners were also identified using letters of the alphabet as follows: Learner A, Learner B, Learner C, Learner D, Learner E, Learner F, Learner G, Learner H, Learner I and Learner J.

4.3.2 Themes and sub-themes in the research findings

Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes which emerged

THEME	SUB THEMES
1. Poor academic performance of orphaned learners.	1. Reasons for orphaned learners' poor academic performance according to the learners. 2. Reasons for orphaned learners' poor academic performance according to the educators. 3. How orphaned learners' academic performance may be improved according to learners. 4. How orphaned learners' academic performance may be improved according to educators.
2. Improvement of academic Performance	1. Improving academic performance of orphaned learners according to the learners. 2. Improving academic performance of orphaned learners according to the guardians.
3. Educators' perceptions of orphaned learners in the school.	1. Educators' perceptions of orphaned learners according to the learners. 2. Educators' perceptions of orphaned learners according to the educators
4. Challenges faced by orphaned learners at school and in their homes.	1. Challenges faced by orphaned learners at school and in their homes according to the learners. 2. Challenges faced by orphaned learners at school and in their homes according to the educators. 3. Challenges faced by orphaned learners at school and in their homes according to the guardians.
5 Government intervention in relation to the academic performance of orphaned learners	1. How the government could intervene in relation to improving the academic performance of the orphaned learners according to the learners. 2. How the government could intervene in relation to improving the academic performance of the orphaned learners according to the educators. 3. How the government could intervene in relation to improving the academic performance of the orphaned learners according to the guardians.

4.4 Data presentation and interpretation

The presentation of data is confined to themes and sub-themes which emerged and as indicated in Table 4.2 above. Accordingly, the themes are discussed first and then the sub-themes.

While the focus group discussions with the orphaned learners and the interviews with the guardian and educators were conducted in English some of the participants, especially the orphaned learners and the guardians responded in their mother tongue (Xitsonga) with the purpose of expressing themselves better than may have been possible in English. However, some of the participants switched between English and Xitsonga when responding. The researcher showed the participants respect and allowed them to express themselves in their mother tongue. In addition, she also saw it as an opportunity to enable the participants to identify their own individual experiences and reality. Hence, the researcher translated some of the sentences and words of Xitsonga into English.

4.4.1 Reasons for orphaned learners' poor academic performance

The perceptions presented in this section emerged from the focus group discussion during which the main focused was on the question: What are the factors/reasons that have resulting in your not performing academically? Of the ten learners who participated in the discussion, the views of three were dominant but were linked to the views of the few others who contributed to the discussion. Their views are presented below.

The focus group discussion and the interview responses of all the participants in this study highlighted the various reasons for the poor academic performance of the orphaned learners in the sampled school. These views were expressed by the educators, orphaned learners and guardians. Some of the reasons were unique to the participants and it is for this reason that the sub-themes emerged. For the sake of logical presentation and analysis, the researcher chose to discuss those sub-

themes that spoke to the reasons for the orphaned learners' poor academic performance. Learner A, Learner B, Learner C and Learner D responded to the above question while the other participants responded to the question below.

4.4.1.1 Reasons for orphaned learners' poor academic performance according to the learners

During the focus group interview the participants explained that there were several apparent reasons for their poor academic performance. The learners had the following to say:

Learner A (An 18-year-old Grade 10 female learner)

Ndzi dyondza ni hlekete kaya ku ni ya dya yini ni ya hlangana na yini, la ni tshamaka kona mati ho xava and mali yo xava mati ni hava , Vana lavanwana va langute ka mina tani hi lo nkulu wa kona, ni na tindisana timbirhi na nwana , lounwana u na 15, lowunwana u na 8." Lexi nga ni endla ku ndzi kuma nwana l ku pfumaleka ka mali hikuva loko vatswari va hina va lova hinkwavo va hi siye na maxaka ya hi hlayisa, hi vona lava a va hi holela mali ya foster care, loko ni va byela ku ni kombela mali ya swakudya va ni byela ku vanhwanyana vanwana va XEXA(move around with men) va xava swakudya . Va ni komba tintangha ta mina va ku va XEXA(move around with men) va kota ku kuma mali yo xava mpahla hi ta ku xavela ku fika rini?.

While I am in class I don't concentrate fully because I'm thinking about what we are going to eat at home, including my siblings and, to make matters worse, in the village where we live we even have to buy water and I don't have money to buy water. I'm the eldest and my siblings (15 and 8 years old) look at me to provide. I have even added more responsibility of having a child at the age of 16 because of financial lack and the push from my relatives. After both of our parents died they left us with relatives who took care of us. The relatives were responsible for our foster care grant but, suddenly it changed while started my high school. When I asked them pocket

money they said that young girls like us should move around and look for the men to they give us money to buy nice clothes and entertainment. They said I had to do as they said because they would not support us any longer as we are grown up.

The extract above suggested that orphaned learners do not do well academically because of the inadequate financial support, physical support, and emotional support that the participant was enduring. The participants in the study indicated that the treatment that the orphaned learners received after the death of their biological parents from their relatives was extremely unpleasant, to the extent that this treatment impacted negatively on their academic performance. When the relatives and the caregivers of the orphaned learners failed to support them, as indicated by the participants in this study, their academic performance at school not only deteriorated but the likelihood was that they would drop out of school to head the families because they were not receiving proper financial and emotional support and care from their relatives. The extracts of the participants also indicated that the grants which their guardians, who were also their foster parents, received on behalf of the orphaned learners were often not used for their benefit. The researcher considered the issue of the lack of money, as was clearly revealed in Learner A's narrative, as crucial and probed further by asking:

"If you don't have money to buy water, as you indicated earlier, where do you get money to buy food to eat with your sibling because your relatives neglected you?"

Below is her response:

We rely and depend on the feeding scheme at the school for the daily meal but it is not enough because they don't package the food to eat at home so, some days, it happens that we go to sleep with empty stomachs (she cried).

The extract reveals the importance of the feeding scheme in the lives of orphaned learners with the participant acknowledging that, without it, she and siblings would probably not have food before going to bed. However, the researcher also understood that the feeding scheme was not enough for the orphaned learners because they were

not able to take the food home.

Learner B (17-year-old Grade 12 boy)

Learner B's response to the question as to the reasons why, as orphans, the participants were not performing well academically, was similar to that of Learner A but also different. Below is what was said:

Ni tshama ni ri wexe ni thlela ni hola foster care ya R970 maar ni hakela transport ya ku ta axikolweni hikuva ni tshama mpfuka wa 7 km ,ni dya yona a kaya na la xikolweni,ni hakela ti extra lessons tani hi leswi ni nga ka Grade 12,cause loko u nga hakeli mali ya ti extra lesson va ku vangela mahlo ku wena a wu hakelangi,a va lavi ku tiva ku ni yi kuma kwihi,minkarhi yinwana ni heta masiku yo tala ni nga ti a xikolweni na ha famba ni tirha ti peace job ku ni ta kota ku hakela mali ya extra class,a vhihini ni ta kambirhi a xikolweni masiku manharhu ni ya tirha as garden boy ku ni ta ngetelela income,swa tika ... (a languta e hansi)".

I'm staying alone at home as a child-headed household and I also get the foster care grant of R970 per month. I pay for the transport to come to school as I travel a distance of 7km to school and I buy groceries. Since I'm a Grade 12 learner there are extra lessons at school to be paid for and it is compulsory that you should pay and attend to improve your performance .If I fail to pay the extra classes I will be embarrassed in front of the other learners and they don't care whether I have money or not. I attend school twice a week, the other days I go to the nearest town and look for the piece jobs to add to my income ... (He looks down). This is the reason why, as an orphan, I do not perform at school.

The evidence above indicated that, although orphaned learners may receive a foster care grant, the grant is not sufficient to cover their schooling expenses. In addition, for an orphaned learner who is in a child-headed household, there are several expenses must be met with the R960 grant that Learner B mentioned. For example,

the learner must buy food and a school uniform. The researcher was amazed to hear that the orphaned learner had to pay for the extra lessons. Where were they expected to find the money? It is clear that orphaned learners in the various schools should be identified and exempted from the extra payments demanded in schools.

Learner C (14-year-old Grade 10 girl)

I used to stay with my grandmother before, but now I'm staying in my parents' house after the bad treatment I received from my grandmother. My grandmother receives the foster-care grant for me. While I was still young it was fine she took care of me in such a way that I don't recall lacking anything in my life, but things started to change when I'm was in Grade 8 when I needed money and her support the most. When I asked her for the money to buy a school uniform she indicated that she did not have the money because it was not my money but her late daughter's money. She said that I had caused daughter's death. I decided to move out and stay in my parents' house because I was tired of the physical and verbal abuse. I started to look for men as a prostitute to find money to buy food and clothes. I do not attend school every day. I do not do my homework and I feel so discouraged that I even want to drop out of school.

The above extract supported Learner A sentiments that orphaned learners who lack financial support often resort prostitution which then affects their academic performance because they do not attend school regularly. This, in turn, leads the learners considering dropping out of school. This highlighted the extent to which factors such as a lack of food and lack of clothes, especially school uniforms, are problematic because these learners do not feel that they are accepted at school.

Learner D (a 15-year-old Grade 11 girl)

Educators also contribute to our poor performance as orphans as they call us names, they always remind us of our past mistakes and they seem to have the attitude that, because we are orphan, this is why we behave as we do. They don't

regard us as learners; they regard us as the learners who are not normal. The way they speak to us as orphans does not motivate us as orphans.

It was interesting to note that the above learner was of the opinion that the educators' behaviour towards orphaned learners contributed to their poor academic achievement. There is no need for the educators to remind the orphaned learner that he/she is an orphan using verbal abuse. Instead of abusing and discouraging learners with the way they spoke to the learners, Learner C's view highlighted that the educators should act *in loco parentis* – "in the place of a parent". Learner C's response/view suggest that encouraging words that motivate learners are pivotal to good academic performance.

4.4.1.2 Reasons for orphaned learners' poor academic performance according to the educators

In addition to the learners' focus group discussions, the educators were also interviewed about the factors that may influence the academic performance of orphaned learners. During the interviews, the educator participants gave their own accounts of the reasons why orphaned learners were not performing well academically. It is important to note that the researcher posed the same question posed to the educators' participants as she had posed to the learner participants. The educator participants' responses are presented below.

Educator 1: Female (49 years old)

I have been a teacher for 20 years in this school. When I started working I found that many learners did not have parents. Since I worked at this school the examination results have never been good because of the number of orphaned learners. They don't complete the tasks they are given tasks. The main reason is that orphaned learners don't have older people to guide them at home; most of the homes are child-headed. They come to school without books or they come late, especially on

Mondays, they sleep in class during school lessons because they go to bed late. They come to school without even bathing and not wearing school uniform.

Being without parental care or the presence of elderly clearly creates a huge problem for orphaned learners. Being without a mother and/or father is a serious challenge because there is no one to guide, encourage and discipline the orphaned learner. The absence of parents who provide, inter alia, guidance, discipline and encouragement may, arguably, have a negative impact on the academic performance of orphaned learners. In addition to the absence of biological parents, it is often difficult for the educators to discipline the orphaned learners because most of them head family (child-headed households) and, therefore, consider themselves as adults. The above extract also illuminated that one reason for the orphaned learners their school task was because there was nobody at home to instruct them. The views of Educator 1 cited above were in line with the sentiments expressed by Learner C that, when funds are unavailable, the learners are forced to come to school dirty and not wearing the proper uniform. In addition, their inability to afford school fees, school uniforms and the other prohibitive costs such as textbooks, and examination fees was often the reason why the orphaned learners did not attend school regularly.

Educator 2: Female (47 years old)

I have been a teacher for 22 years in this school. I started observing orphaned learners after 6 years of my teaching when there were numerous orphans. The reason why they do not perform well academically is because they have to head the household and stay with their siblings. There was a case where an orphaned learner did not arrive to write a formal test, then we checked what the reason was the learner stated that his/her little younger sister had been sick and the learner had decided to take her to clinic. The principal instructed us to give her the test to write but she did not perform well on because she had not had time to study because of her being responsible for taking care of her siblings.

The above extract highlighted that, when a learner is left alone to care of his/her siblings, the learner has to become the adult who is responsible for taking care of the other siblings instead of concentrating on school activities and, hence, the poor academic performance. The researcher's assumption was, therefore, parental absence may be harmful for learners and may affect their academic performance. These learners who are left alone often do not perform academically and may even drop out of school to find work. They are worried about where their next meal is coming for their siblings. Although some of the orphaned learners did ask their neighbours to assist and support them their neighbours were sometimes too busy to help them or they were not prepared to because of the cause of their parents' deaths. Having to take care of their siblings and assume the entire responsibility for the household then impacted negatively on their academic performance.

Educator 3: Male (45 years old)

I have been a teacher for 25 years in this school teaching commercial subject. Some of the orphaned learners, they don't complete either their homework or their classwork and, hence, it affects their performance, and they don't come to school. The orphans are not performing because they are the breadwinner, they are everything and, as well, the grant causes them not to come to school. However, this is not all of the learners and some of them are trying but the majority are not performing because of the above. Young as they are, because of the grant, they have girls to cook for them and, by so doing, they end up impregnating each other and then drop out of school.

Educator 2 and Educator 3 expressed the same sentiment that, when orphaned learners head their families they become adults and have more unexpected responsibilities that result in their performing academically. Female orphaned learners who were left alone between the ages 13 and 18 often fell pregnant and had a child of their own. The participants quoted above were of the view that these orphaned learners become pregnant because they did not have older people to guide them. They also indicated that, from what they had observed, the foster care grant contributed to the behaviour of the orphans because they were receiving a sum of money every

month and there was no need for them to attend school regularly or to complete their homework. Some of regarded R960 as a lot of money and they ended up not attending school.

4.4.2 Improving the academic performance of orphaned learners

This section presents the responses of the participants on ways in which the academic performance of orphaned learners could be improved. Extracts from the interviews and the researcher's interpretations are given below.

4.4.2.1 Opinions of learner participants on improving the academic performance of orphaned learners

Learner E (A girl in Grade 11)

As orphans we should have a self-concept and the resilience that, regardless of what we come across, we can still make it. It should start from within and you motivate yourself that you want to make difference. I think you must encourage yourself that you are not different from the other learners – the only difference is that they still have parents and we don't have but we are still learners. You must spend extra time to study books and discipline yourself. The other thing is that, even if I am an orphan, I can dream as much as the non-orphan.

The researcher was impressed with these words of Learner E which were words of wisdom and encouragement from within her. The researcher considered the issue of resilience raised by this learner. Resilience is the capacity to face challenges and to become more capable despite adverse experiences. The researcher was touched during the focus group discussion to find that there were orphaned learners who still believed in themselves and were enthusiastic about improving their academic performance despite the fact that parents had died. Accordingly, the researcher

probed the positive attitude demonstrated by Learner E by asking the following question:

“What is your career dream after matric? *“My dream is to be a psychologist or a doctor.”*

The extract above showed that not all orphaned learners were discouraged by their orphan hood and that some were willing to forget the past and move forward to reach their goals. Learner E spoke about resilience and, as a result, the researcher noted that, if the orphaned learners are supported, loved and guided in their home environment and at school, some of them may perform well academically and keep alive their dreams although they have lost their parents.

Learner I (a 16-year-old Grade 11 boy)

As orphans we should be disciplined in class and have a positive attitude. Educators must support us, they should understand that we are learners and be patient with us. Even if we sometimes do not do the right thing they should not shout at us, they should find a way of approaching us in a good way. We understand that sometimes we made it tough for them but they should not remind us of our orphan hood. Teachers should follow up if we do not come to school because they may find that I have a serious challenge that causes me not to attend school. The caregivers also should not abuse us verbally and physically because, as orphans, we are vulnerable to all sort of abuse, such as physical, emotional, sexual and verbal abuse.

The above abstract showed that the orphaned learners required support from various stake holders the educators and the community members who comprise their caregivers – as they could help them to perform academically. Learner E and Learner I expressed the sentiment that, if they received support, especially from the educators, they could do better. The educators should have patience in dealing with orphans. The researcher realised that the educators should develop a loving heart in order to tolerate the orphans even despite the fact that this may not be easy because

of their unpleasant behaviour. It is for this reason that the educators should be aware of the all the learners' problems, including the orphans. Based on the responses cited above it becomes clear that orphaned learners are often not taken care for at school and/or by their guardians. The researcher suggests that the learners spend long hours with the educators and that, in fact, the educators are the only 'parents' on whom the orphans may depend. Equally, the educators should make the school environment a home for all learners, including orphans. When an orphan is not able to find love in the community, he/she should receive such love at school from the educator and, when not able to find love from his/her relatives, the orphaned learner should get it at school. The researcher realised, from the narratives of the participant, that the orphaned learners missed having a mother and/or father and, thus, they should find this at school in the love shown to them by the educators and principals of the schools.

Learner J (a 15-year-old Grade 10 boy)

A ka community hi langutele rirhandzu na support, a va tshiki moya wa ku a hi vana va vona va hi rhandza,va nga hi ehleketeleli swo ka swi nga ri kahle. Mhani loko va lova a ni ri na 7 years, mhana mina van i dyondisa ku mutswari unwana na unwana loyi a ringanaka na mhana mina I mhani, loyi a ringanaka na papa mina I papa.

I think we also need the community to support us and show love. They should regard us as their own children. If we make the mistakes they should guide us on the way. My mother passed on when I was 7, she taught me that a mother who is the same age as her is my mother, and the father who is the same age as my father is the father so we expect the community not to regard us as outcasts and I hope, if this happen, our results will improve.

The extract above shows that although the mother and father give birth to a child, community raises the child. Hence, the popular saying that "Nature brings the child but the community raises the child". This, in turn, highlights that a parent does not

own a child because the child is the parent's biological child and that a child who is not a someone's biological child is still that person's child. In light of this, the researcher agrees with Learner J that a person of the same age of your mother is "*mother*" and the man of the same age as your father is "*father*"

Learner J also revealed that orphans lack a parental figure because the caregivers tend to treat caring for them as a job and they do not nurture them properly. Thus, the researcher suggests that all orphans were shown parental care they would not feel lonely despite the loss of their parents as every woman or man would regard the orphans as his/her own.

4.4.2.2 Ways to improve learner performance according to the educators

During the interviews the educator participants expressed their views on ways in which to improve the academic performance of the orphaned learners. These views are presented below.

Educator 1:

Another positive factor that can make the performance of orphaned learners improve is adopting them and checking their performance. As an educator 1 managed to adopt a learner from grade 8 after realising that he lived with his brother who was abusing him physically and this was affecting his performance. I took him and he lives with me in my own house and I treated him as my own biological son. It was not easy at the beginning because my own children did not accept him since I have a boy who is the same age as him and he became jealous (She laughs). I trained my own children that they should adjust because he is the additional member in the family. He is now in grade 12 and performing very well.

The above abstract shows that Learner J and Educator 1 had the same view of the saying that "*nature brings the child and the community raises the child*". The participants cited supported the view of a "child with more than one parent". When

other parent dies the child should remain with the other parent if there is a culture of caring in the society. If this is practised in the society then the orphaned learners would perform better academically. If the orphaned learners are not taken care of by the society they are vulnerable to physical, sexual and emotional abuse as well as other types of abuse, such as psychological abused, material and educational neglect, exploitation by family members and many more. An orphaned learner who has been abused in any of the abovementioned ways is hardly to concentrate at school and will end up not performing well academically.

Educator 3

Educator 3 clearly supported what Educator 1 had said. According to Educator 3, *As educators including the principals of the school we should adopt orphaned learners. It is best to adopt the ones we are not teaching. Assist them by checking their performance; I think this would assist in improving their academic performance.*

Educator 2

As educators, if we can adopt these orphans and we live with them under the same roof, although it is not easy, the possibility is there that they may change their behaviour. What I have observed is that orphans are attention seekers – it is not easy to make an orphan happy. Let's try to adopt them although is not easy because some of the orphans end up stealing from us or abusing us but, by God's grace, we could do it to help the orphan learners to perform academically.

It was clear from the above views of Educator 1, Educator 2 and Educator 3 that they all believed that educators should act as parents. They should know the type of learners whom they are teaching, they should study their behaviour and they should be able to identify the factors that result in the learners not performing academically. In addition, they treat all learners, including orphans, equally. They should also adopt the orphans and treat them as their own. As Educator 1 mentioned above this would

benefit these orphaned learners. If an orphaned learner is regarded as a child after losing one or both parents by an older person this encourages and motivates the learner who realises that there are other people who are still prepared to take care of him/her.

4.4.3 Challenges experienced by orphaned learners at school and at home

This section presents the responses of the learner participants in relation to the challenges they experience at school and at home. The participants in this study voiced their views of possible ways in which their academic performance could be improved. The next section contains extracts from the participants and the researcher's interpretation.

4.4.3.1 Challenges experienced by orphaned learners at school and at home according to the learners

Learner F (a 16-year-old Grade 11 boy)

lhmm ... non-orphaned learners undermine us, they don't respect us, even if you can do something good they don't appreciate it (he looks down and cries). Learner B supported by saying that "it is true they don't want to associate with us because they are from good backgrounds and they still have their parents. They have a negative attitude towards us as orphans and they influence each other. They feel they should not be friends with us because we are orphans and we don't have any money. During the group discussions in class they don't want us to be part of their group.

The above extract highlights that the orphaned learners are often not comfortable in school with non-orphaned learners because the latter did not treat them well. The researcher realised that orphaned learners experience emotional difficulties after losing a parent/parents and are sometimes teased by their classmates because they are orphans. If an orphaned learner does not have shoes to wear he/she is laughed

at by the non-orphaned learners. The researcher observed that it is not easy for the orphaned learners to disclose their poverty because they are afraid of being laughed at by their peers. In addition, the educators also treated the orphaned learners differently from the other learners. When the non-orphaned learners learnt that the orphaned learners were without parents they often started to ostracise them, call them names and refuse to share a desk with them.

Learner H (a 16-year-old girl in Grade 11)

Mina ni tshama ni ri wexe, vatwsari va hi siye hi ri vambirhi na boti, sweswi yena u tshike xikolo a ni siya ni ri one, a ni holi mali ya foster care hiku pfumala xaka leri nga ta ni holela ,loko vatswari va lova a ku ri hava yindlu yo tlela ka yona aku rina tindlu timbirhi ta mabyasi na sweswi ta ha ri kona ,vanwan vaakeriwile ti RDP houses ka hina ku hava na sweswi. Loko timfula tina ni tlela ni yimile cause ka tsakama ,swani demotivator na ku hlaya tibuku ,sometimes loko timfula ti na a swi ni oloveli ku ya a xikolweni hikuva tibuku ta tsakama na yunifomo ya tsakama.

I live alone at home, when my parents died they also left my brother who is now a drop-out learner as our lack of money forced him to look for a job in Gauteng. Since that time I have never known his whereabouts. I'm not getting any foster care grant because I do not have a relative to take responsibility for the grant. I don't have a house in which to live except the two huts that my parents left. When it rain all my books and my uniform get wet and I end up not going to school for some days, depending on how long it rains. I'm not motivated even to go to school because of the situation at home. Some learners from the disadvantage families are getting RDP houses but mine never happened, it is so painful (she cried).

The extract above revealed that the inability to pay school fees or afford the school uniform and the other prohibitive costs such as textbooks and examination fees prevent orphaned learners from attending school. Several of the orphaned learners identified their inability to pay their school fees, stating this resulted in their dropping

out of school. Although the government schools no longer charge school fees the orphaned learners at high school have to pay for the extra lessons they need to improve their academic performance. Those orphaned learners who live in a shack are not protected from the rain and this is an additional challenge that prevents them from performing well academically.

4.4.3.2 Challenges experienced by orphaned learners at school and at home according to the educators

See extracts from the participants and the researcher's interpretation below.

Educator 2

I had a case where a learner had just lost her one parent. She used to come to school late every day because she was the one who had to bath and cook breakfast for her sick parent. You could see that this learner was capable but her performance was not good because she either didn't come to school or she came late. When her mother passes away we learned that she had been taking care of her sick parent. After the death of her parent it became worse until we called her and spoke to her. Orphans are not open. When she writes a test she did not perform well at all.

Another case was that of a Grade 11 learner who lost her father and then the following month she lost her mother. She was the best learner in the grade. After the death of her mother, before the burial, I went together with my colleagues to comfort the young girl. She felt hopeless so we prayed with her and we quoted the scriptures from the Bible. We said to the girl to let God be with her in this time of trial. However, she answered ('Mam' she cried) 'There is no such God, how can this God allow me to lose both my parents and leave me with 2 siblings of 8 years and 2 years'. Fortunately, one of the family members who was a social worker adopted the learner and her siblings and she continued with her study and now she is a professional nurse.

Both extracts above revealed that the challenges faced by the orphaned learners at home are often unbearable. When children become orphaned, it is a new beginning for which no one, least of all the learners, is prepared. When these learners are not able to find support from their caregivers, community members or educators they become miserable and this obviously impacts adversely on their academic performance.

4.4.3.3 Challenges experienced by orphaned learners at school and at home according to the guardians

See extracts from the participants and the researcher's interpretation below.

Guardian 1 (a 60-year-old female guardian)

Ni na malembe aye ku tala ni kha ri ni tshama na vana lavo tala va swsiwana lava nga famberiwa hi vatswari va vona .Loko vatswari va vona va lova hi siyelerisana ka malembe a swi ri swinharhu lexo hetelela a xa ha mama ,ni sala ni swi kurisa .,mhani wa vana lava I madyondza ya mina ya xisati,va sale na papa wa vona kwale vukatini ivi na yena a lova hi lembe ra ku landa ,see ni ya va teka.A swini olovelangi ku va kurisa hiku a va ha ri vantsong kambe sweswi lonkulu u le vukatini a nga hetangi xikolo hiko ku landelela vafana a ze a ya kuma xidakwa ,lexi xo hetelela xi endla grade 9 u na malembe ya 20,a xi yi twanga nsimbhi xa dzaha,xi vuya na vusiku ,a xi hlayi tibuku,hey... na mina ni karhele loko xikwembu a xona i tekavu ni ya wisa ni swi twle swa tika (she cried).

I stayed with these orphaned learners for many years. When their parents died they left me with three children – 2 girls and 1 boy. Eyyyyy ... it is not easy as a grandparent to raise these orphaned learners because, for them to cope, you have to spoil them, treat them in such a way that they are not reminded that they don't have parents. I tried but academically they didn't perform. The first girl ended up dropping out of school and marrying a drunkard, the second one also ended up

dropping out of school and working in a shop and earning peanuts, the last one is a 20 years old boy who is repeating Grade 9 for the third time. The educators called me to tell me they are worried about his behaviour and his not doing his school work. He comes back late every day, he is a drunkard, he does not respect elderly people, it is tough and (she cried).

The above abstract highlighted that it is not easy for grandparents to raise their orphaned grandchildren after their parents have died. The grandparents often lack the skills to deal with the post traumatic experiences of the orphans. The guardian participants reported how they had helped their children who had died in front of the orphans and the experiences had been extremely traumatic for the children.

A participant in a study conducted by a previous researcher had also indicated how her grandchild had behaved strangely and had even attempted commit suicide more than once. As a result she had decided to keep her chronic medication next door lest the orphan take an overdose. Another participant mentioned that her unruly grandchild had reported her to the police officers for abuse. These findings confirmed Guardian 1's extract above.

Guardian 3 (54 year old male guardian)

I'm staying with my grandson who lost his parents five years ago but I'm tired because of his bad behaviour. He is not performing well at school because he doesn't study at home. When I try to discipline him he states clearly that I am not his father and I mustn't trouble him (a wu papa mina u nga ni karhati.)

Guardian 1 and Guardian 3 were of the same view that the orphaned learners demonstrated strange behaviour that resulted in their not performing well academically. The participants indicated clearly that they were not coping well with the orphaned learners who behaviour led to their poor academic performance but they did not want to be guided by their grandparents.

4.4.4 Educators' perceptions of orphaned learners in the classroom

This section presents the responses of the educator participants in relation to their perceptions of the orphaned learners in the classroom. They also voiced their views on ways in which to improve the academic performance of the orphaned learners. See extracts and researcher's interpretation below.

4.4.4.1 Educators' perceptions of orphaned learners in the classroom according to the learners

Learner G (a 16-year-old Grade 10 girl)

Some of the teachers, they call us names and say that we are orphans and, hence, we are attention seekers. We are afraid to tell them our difficulties because they do not support us. They have got a negative attitude towards us. They don't believe that we are able to do better like normal learners, Sometimes we even hide from them that we are orphans because, after discovering that we are orphans, they start to judge us on little mistakes. However not all educators are not caring as some try to intervene in our problems and help.

The extract above highlights that some of the educators do not treat the orphaned learners well and that they demonstrate a negative attitude towards the orphaned learners. It was clearly easy for the learners to identify the educators who did treat them well and also who did not treat them well. They would not even ask the latter for help even if they had a problem.

4.4.4.2 Educators' perceptions of orphaned learners in the classroom according to the educators

Educator 3

However not all the orphans display bad behaviour but a lot of them don't participate and some of them just keep quiet, I had one orphaned learner whom I knew was

there by the noise he made while some come to school only once in the term. You can't remove these learners out of school even though they misbehave because they will lose their foster care grant because according to SASSA they only receive the foster care grant while in school until the age of 21 if still in school. The reason why some of them are bullies at school is because they are either alone at home or they are heading the household.

Educator 2

The orphaned learners' behaviour is not good at all (she laughs), these are troublesome learners. When a learner report that someone stolen his/her food package or school material and you conduct a search you will find it inside the orphan learner's bag. They don't mind using vulgar language in the class in the presence of the teacher and they have no respect for the teachers. When you try to motivate them they don't respond and they shift the words of motivation to the non- orphaned learners. They cause confusion in the class, making a noise, disturbing others.

The extracts above highlight the educators' perceptions of the orphaned learners as displaying unruly behaviour and not doing well academically. As a result the researcher suggested that parental involvement and supervision have a direct influence on an academic performance

Educator 1

They don't do either their homework or their classwork, they make a noise in the class, they bully the other learners, they seek attention from the educators and their fellow learners just to interrupt the class and they sometimes come to class with a cell phone and use it to disturb the lesson, I remember a certain incident that happened during my class where a learner brought a cell phone and make it play music. When I asked the learner why he had brought the phone to school as there is a rule that cell phones are not allowed in the school he replied that "you are not my parent to tell not

to do this and that. You are not the one who bought me the phone". The extracts above suggest that orphaned learners are perceived by the educators as not doing their school work and causing confusion in the class. The researcher suggested that parental support in the education of their children is important as supervision and assistance during the children's school years clearly play an important role in teaching learners how to cope at school, prompting sound study habits. The extracts above also suggest that orphaned learners are perceived by their teachers as displaying unruly behaviour.

4.4.5 How can government intervene to improve the academic performance of orphaned learners?

This section presents the responses of participants in respect of government intervention to improve the academic performance of orphaned learners with the participants expressing their views on ways in which this could happen. See extracts and the researcher's interpretation below.

4.4.5.1 How can government intervene to improve the orphaned learners' academic performance according to the learners?

Learner G

Government should consider us as orphans in such a way that they develop a school for orphans where we would be counselled and guided as orphans and not mix with non-orphaned because we feel insecure when we attend school with learners who talk about their mother's birthday and their father's birthday. The government should also train educators to teach orphans. The government should establish more orphanages in our area because we don't have such organisations.

The extract above from the learner indicates that the government should establish more orphanages, build schools for orphans and train educators to teach orphans. Learner G's view was that, as orphans they should have their own place that they could

call home and have trained people to teach them separately as orphans. The researcher observed that there were no orphanages in the area where the study was conducted and that, as the participant mentioned, an orphanage may help to alleviate the problem.

4.4.5.2 How can government intervene to improve the orphaned learners' performance according to the educators?

Educator 3

Government should work together with the community through the social workers. Then there should be a programme of managing these orphans which an orphan receiving foster care through the social worker who would manage and monitor the situation. The social worker would place the orphaned learners and talk to them regularly. This is often not the case as orphans don't even know their social worker. The government, through the social worker, should encourage the orphans by giving them incentives and motivating them by promising them that if they perform well, they will get bursaries.

The extract above highlights that the social worker should manage and take responsibility for controlling the foster care grant for orphaned learners. Many of the participants revealed that their relatives and caregivers were misusing the orphaned learners' grants. The motivation from the government through social workers in terms of giving them bursaries for academic achievement would assist in improving academic performance. The researcher observed it was not easy for the orphaned learners to see a social worker in the rural area where the study was conducted. It seemed that it was first time the orphaned learner participants had seen a social worker when they saw the social worker during the interviews.

Educator 2

I blame the government just a little for giving these learners money for foster care as

they don't use it properly. They don't come to school because of this money as the money has spoilt them in such a way that they forget that they are orphans. Government should build boarding schools for orphans with teachers trained specifically to deal with orphans and remove them from schools for non-orphans. They feel so neglected because there are parents next door but they don't have their parents. Boarding schools for orphans, I think, may help because they would see each other and realise that they are not alone because the other children do not have a parent or parents. They would share the pain and understand each other and have a common goal. Government should also train educators to provide counselling that they are not isolated from the community and prove to them that they want their future to be brighter instead of giving them money with which to buy drink alcohol and the cellphones that they use to disturb the class. They feel inferior if they attend school with non-orphans. A better solution would be to give these orphaned learners their own, separate place.

The extract above supported the view that orphaned learners should not be given foster care grant because this results in their not coming to school and not taking their schooling seriously because they know that they have an income at the end of the month. Educator 2 was of the same view as Educator 3 that the government should build schools for orphans that would cater for orphaned learners only.

Educator 1

"Government should intervene by organising people who will guide them because these learners lack guidance."

The researcher asked the participant the question: Are there any orphanages in the community? The participant replied as follows: *"No, there are no such things except the drop-in centres but they are not effective because of a lack of support from government."*

The extract highlighted that the government should intervene by training more people, for example, social workers, who would be able to guide the orphans and counsel

them. The researcher also observed that there were no orphanages in the area where the study was conducted, only the drop-in centres that were not effective.

4.4.5.3 How can a government intervene to improve the orphaned learners' performance according to the guardians?

Guardian 1

Mfumo wo endle xihoxo ka ku va wu yimise mhaka yaku ku nga ha biwi vana lava hiku hina hamb h ova xupula akaya lexi kolweni miri a ma ha bi,se a ni tivi ku hi nga endla yini.

Government made a huge mistake stopping the corporal punishment of learners. Even if we try to discipline them at home they are not disciplined at school. The government should bring back corporal punishment that would be used for all learners, either orphans or non-orphans.

The above extract makes the point that if corporal punishment is not used to discipline the learners, including the orphans, the academic performance of the learners drops. The school is the only place which disciplines learners but, if corporal punishment is no longer used, this obviously affects academic performance.

Guardian 2

Mfumu a wu fanele wu endla ndhawu ya vona va ri voxe,laha a wu ta hi wisisa ku va hlayisa hiku va karhata a hi ta hamb hi ya va pfuxela Kunene,Mali leyi mfumo wu va nyikaka va yak u dzaheni va yi tirhisa hi ndlela yo ka yi nga ri kahle.

The government should build a school for orphans and their own homes (resident orphanage) so we are relieved of taking care of them because we are not trained to take care of them and we are old. We won't live forever and we will also die, so they should have a place to call home.

The above suggestion made by Guardian 2 is similar to the suggestion of Educator 2, which indicated clearly their view that government should build a school for orphaned learners so that they would not have to attend the same schools with non-orphaned learners. Educator 2 also stated that government should train the educators so that they could provide counselling to assist the orphaned learners to realise that they are not being isolated from the community but that everybody wants a brighter future for them. In addition, they should not be given money in the form of a grant as this money enables them to buy money with which they buy alcohol and cell phones which they then use to disturb the class. Attending school together with non-orphans means that they often feel inferior to the non-orphans. Thus, a solution would be for them to be schooled separately.

4.5 Data from observation

This section presents the data which was collected through observation. A separate section was dedicated to this observation data because it was limited to the classroom whereas, in the sections above, the researcher incorporated the data from the focus group discussion and interviews as applicable to the relevant themes and sub-themes. The observation schedule served as the researcher's guide. The guide was structured around and aimed at understanding the educators' interaction with the orphaned learners and the attitudes/behaviour of orphaned learners in relation to academic performance in attempt to further probe the themes which had in the study.

4.5.1 Educators' interaction with orphaned learners

The researcher conducted observation in the classrooms to scrutinise how the teachers interacted with the learners during lesson presentation. The researcher took notes in order to help her to identify how teaching and learning took place as well as how the learners participated. The researcher also conducted observation in order to ascertain whether the educators were paying sufficient attention to all the

learners including the orphans. The researcher wishes to highlight at this point that it was through observation that she became acquainted with the orphans in the class. Some of the situations that she had observed in relation to the orphaned learners are discussed below. The researcher had two sessions of observation, the first one was for Grade 10, and the second observation was for Grade 11 and 12 during the exam preparations since the study catered Grade 10 to Grade 12.

The researcher observed a Grade 10 class and noticed that some learners attended the class before break but that after break they disappeared. Accordingly, the researcher came to the conclusion that they had come to school to eat the food that was available and that, after eating, they went home. As a mathematics teacher the researcher conducted the observation in a mathematics classes. The researcher observed that, when the siren rang to signal the end of the lesson, the educator put down his chalk even if he were still writing on the board. However, he clearly had no other option as because the learners were making so much noise. It was if the teacher was saying "Thank you siren".

The researcher observed that the educator did not appear to know the learners' name and just pointed a finger at the learners when they were required to answer a question. It was therefore not easy for the educator to control the learners and they clearly did not respect him. It was also noted that, in the main, it was the orphaned learners who were making the most noise. The researcher was of the opinion that one of the reasons why the orphaned learners were not performing was because the educators did not know their learners and obviously would not have even considered that the orphans may need more of attention than the non-orphans. The researcher noted that knowing and using a learner's name helps the educator to gain the learner's attention while also showing a high level of awareness. The researcher's view is that no learner, including orphaned learners, will misbehave if the educator knows the learner's name.

The researcher observed that the educators in Grade 10 were not identifying orphaned

learners with their behavioural problems and, hence, they confused them with learners who were behaving well even if they were orphans and shouted at them. The educators were clearly not even aware of the orphaned learners' backgrounds. Nevertheless, the researcher also concluded that some of the educators observed in Grades 11 and 12 class were assisting and understood all the learners, including the orphaned learners, and were develop teacher/learner relationships but they were in the minority.

4.5.2 The attitude/behaviour of orphaned learners in the classroom

During the second session the researcher observed the behaviour of the orphaned learners in Grade 11 and noted that they were learners who interrupted the lessons, they made the most noise and their concentration was worse than that of their counterparts. The researcher noted that the educators paid attention to all the learners. However, the majority of the orphaned learners did not participate in class and paid sporadic attention during lessons. The same observation was made in another class (Grade 12) although it was slightly different in Grade 12. In Grade 12 the orphaned learners appeared to make more noise toward the end of the lesson. The researcher also observed that some of the learners in class were not wearing full school uniforms. These learners were mainly orphans whose uniforms were also dirty. The researcher was often able to distinguish the orphaned learners because their uniforms were torn and patched. The researcher noted the following during the second observation in Grade 12 as the learners were preparing to write their final examination they were not as noisy during the lesson as the learners in the other grades. The researcher assumed that the Grade 12 learners were more grown up than the Grades 10 and 11 learners and, also, they were anxious about their final examinations. The researcher also noted that the majority of the Grade 12 learners were absent and that the absentees were mostly orphans.

4.6 Summary of chapter

This chapter focused on the presentation and interpretation of the data which was collected from the selected school in the Shamavunga Circuit, Mopani District in Limpopo Province. In other word, the sampled school. The data was collected using focus –group discussion with ten (Grade 10-12) orphaned learners and interview (face to face) with three guardians and three educators. The perceptions of all sampled participants are clear about challenges of orphaned learners at home and school; attitudinal/behavioural issues of orphaned learners whilst learning and teaching takes place in classroom, and government interference issues with orphaned learners school. These perceptions of sampled participants manifest in findings that are fundamentally explanations of the academic performance of orphaned learners in sampled school. In sum, this chapter points to emerged findings of the study. The findings are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presented and analysed the data that had been gathered from the interviews and focus group discussion and from the classroom observation that were conducted. There were 16 participants in the study, namely, 10 orphaned learners, three guardians and three educators. The findings presented in the previous chapter are summarised and discussed in this chapter. In addition, based on the findings of the study, recommendations are suggested.

The study investigated the perceptions of educators and orphaned learners in secondary schools in relation to their academic performance. The sampled school is situated in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo province in South Africa. The study also investigated the reasons, challenges and factors that played a role in the orphaned learners underperforming academically. In addition, the study also investigated measures that could be taken to improve the academic performance of orphaned learners. This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of the study and then discusses the conclusions that were drawn on the basis of the findings. Thereafter, recommendations are made. It is hoped that these recommendations may prove useful in alleviating the problems that affect the academic performance of orphaned learners in the Shamavunga Circuit, Mopani District, in Limpopo.

5.2 Summary of the study

The researcher embarked on this study with the intention of addressing the following research questions:

5.2.1 The main research question of the study

What are the perceptions of learners and educators about the academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools in the Shamavunga circuit, Limpopo province?

5.2.2 The sub-questions that were formulated included the following:

- ❖ How are orphaned learners at high schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo performing academically?
- ❖ What are the challenges experienced by orphaned learners at schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo?
- ❖ How do educators perceive the academic performance of orphaned learners at schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo?
- ❖ How do orphaned learners perceive their own academic performance?
- ❖ What are the challenges which orphaned learners face at home that impact on their academic performance?

5.2.3 Chapter 1 – Summary

The first chapter addressed the statement of the research problem wherein the researcher highlighted the significance of the study. It was noted that, as reported by UNICEF (2015), indicated that there are approximately 153 million orphans worldwide. The researcher highlighted in this chapter that the majority of orphaned learners are living with extended family members and they often become burden on these family members. The researcher also highlighted in this chapter that many orphaned learners live in child-headed households as their parents have died and left them with no supervision. The researcher concluded that orphaned learners require support to cope with the emotional trauma resulting from the death of their parents and this brings to the fore the significance of this study.

5.2.4 Chapter 2 – Summary

The second chapter focused primarily on the theories that underpinned the study, namely: human need theory as well as critical emancipatory theory (CET). It is evident that learners need certain basic elements such as the presence of parents in order to survive and flourish. According to CET, a person has the potential to become anything he/she wishes as long as he/she is given the resources to enable him/her to perform and achieve and, hence, the researcher's view that orphaned learners require the support of both educators and caregivers to realise their potential and become whatever they want to be in life.

5.2.5 Chapter 3 – Summary

The third chapter outlined the research design used in the study which was qualitative in nature. The researcher selected the qualitative method as the main of the study was to investigate the lived experiences of the orphaned learners in respect of their academic performance. This qualitative study used narratives with focus group interviews and in-depth interviews being conducted. After the data had been collected it was analysed using the narratives. One secondary school with registered Grades 10, 11 and 12 orphaned learners was purposefully sampled together with their educators and the orphaned learners' guardians. The researcher conducted focus group interviews with the learners and in-depth interviews with the educators and guardians of the orphaned learners (see Appendixes G, H and J for the interview guide questions that were used).

Ten orphaned learners participated in the focus group interviews while three educators and three guardians participated in the in-depth interviews. Thus, the total number of participants for the study was sixteen while one school only sampled.

5.2.6 Chapter 4 – Summary

The fourth chapter contains a detailed analysis of the data that was collected as well as the discussion on the data. Based on the main research question as well as the sub-questions cited above the researcher identified five themes that assisted in ensuring that the objectives of the study were realised. In addition, 23 sub-themes emerged from the main themes.

The 23 sub-themes were organised as follows: the first 12 were based on the educators' responses, 16 the learners' responses and the last five the guardians' responses.

The table below serves as the summary of the subthemes and the categories:

Table 5.1: Summary of subthemes and categories

	THEME	SUB-THEME
	EDUCATORS RESPONSES	
1	Reasons for orphaned learners' poor academic performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Lack of parental care❖ Lack of financial support❖ Orphaned learners come from child-headed households
2	Educators' perceptions of orphaned learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Orphaned learners display unruly behaviour in class❖ Failure to do school work
3	Challenges faced by orphaned learners at school and in their homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Orphaned learners live in poor households❖ No support from their caregivers and community❖ No support from educators and their fellow non-orphaned learners

4	Government interventions to improve the performance of orphaned learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Government should support orphaned learners by building places to take care of them ❖ Government should train educators who will guide orphaned learners and counsel them
5	Improvement in orphaned learners' poor academic performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Educators adopt the orphaned learners and monitor their academic performance ❖ Treat all learners equally, including orphaned learners
	LEARNERS' RESPONSES	
1	Reasons for orphaned learners' poor academic performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Lack of financial support ❖ Lack of emotional support ❖ Lots of responsibilities i.e. taking care of siblings
2	Educators' perceptions of orphaned learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Educators do not treat the orphaned learners well ❖ They display a negative attitude towards the orphaned learners ❖ They call them names
3	Challenges faced by orphaned learners at school and in their homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Non-orphaned learner undermine orphaned learners ❖ Staying alone at home without parental supervision ❖ Inability to pay for extra lessons ❖ Living in shacks and lack of school uniform ❖ No food to eat after school

4	Government intervention to improve the academic performance of orphaned learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Build schools for orphaned learners and train teachers who will work with orphaned learners only. ❖ Government should establish more Orphanages.
5	Improvement of orphaned learners' poor performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Orphaned learners must develop a positive self-concept and develop the resilience to believe they will succeed no matter what. ❖ Study more and forget their situation. ❖ Positive attitude.
	GUARDIANS' RESPONSES	
1	Government intervention to improve the academic performance of orphaned learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The government should bring back corporal punishment. ❖ The government should build more institutions to take care of orphans as the guardians are educationally illiterate and, thus, not able to help them with their homework.
2	Challenges faced by orphaned learners at school and in their homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Guardians lack the skills required to deal with the orphaned learners. ❖ Orphaned learners are not satisfied with being in the care of their guardians and they seek too much attention. ❖ Orphaned learners do not want to be disciplined by their guardians.

5.3 Key research findings

The main aim of the study was to investigate the perceptions of educators and learners of academic performance of orphaned learners at secondary schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo.

The sub-aims of the study are listed below:

- Identify the reasons why some orphaned children perform either poorly or well in secondary school.
- Investigate the challenges faced by orphaned learners at schools and in their homes.
- Understand the perceptions of both educators and orphaned learners of the academic performance of orphaned learners at school.
- Investigate ways in which their academic performance may be improved.
- Understand how the government may intervene to improve the academic performance of orphaned learners.

In an attempt to achieve the above aims which are linked to the study's research questions the researcher used the sub-themes and categories that had been identified during the data collection and data analysis to ascertain the findings of the study.

5.3.1 Sub-theme One: Poor academic performance of orphaned learners

5.3.1.1 Reasons for the poor academic performance of the orphaned learners according to the learners

The study revealed that their relatives often mistreat orphaned learners after the death of their biological parents. In addition, the study revealed that, when their relatives and the care- givers fail to support them financially, their academic performance at school not only deteriorates but they often drop out of school to head their families as a result

of their not receiving proper financial and emotional care from their relatives. The orphaned learners often experience a serious lack of resources, including money to pay for extra lessons and uniforms. The study also found that, according to the extracts of the participants that the grants that the guardians, who are also the foster care parents, receive on behalf of orphaned learners are often not used for the benefit of the orphaned learners. This issue of a lack of money was highlighted by almost all the participants. The study also revealed the importance of a feeding scheme in the lives of the orphaned learners with many of the orphaned learner participants acknowledging that, without it, they would probably not have any food to eat before going to bed. However, the study also revealed that the feeding scheme was not sufficient for the orphaned learners because they were not able to take food home.

The study found that although the foster care grant was useful to the orphaned learners, it is not sufficient for a secondary school orphan learner who is expected to pay for extra lessons. The study also revealed that the orphans were expected to pay the extra lessons classes and, if they did not do so, the educators would embarrass them in front of the other learners. It also emerged from the study that the orphaned learners often did not attend school regularly because they had to find a piece job to be able to pay for extra lessons. In addition, the study found the educators often contributed negatively to the academic performance of orphaned learners by calling them names, instead of acting *in loco parentis* and trying to fill the parental role.

The information gathered from the focus group interviews, face-to-face interviews and observations revealed that orphans often do not concentrate during lessons because of all their worries. In some cases, they are forced to change environments and adjust the living without parents while sometimes they even have to move from living with their nuclear families after the death of their parents to living with their extended families, for example, their grand-mothers. However, the bad treatment meted out by their grandparents sometimes forces them to head their families. In line with Cree et al (2006) who cited their heavy adult responsibilities as contributing significantly to the poor performance of orphaned learners, this study also revealed

that the huge burdens of parental responsibilities placed upon these child heads of household play a large role in their poor academic performance. Cree et al's study revealed that these orphaned learners are expected to carry out the day to day activities of the family, including putting food on the table on a daily basis as well as being responsible in other ways for their sibling brothers and sisters. It was also revealed that some of the female orphaned learners were forced by their relatives to find men who would will buy them food because their relatives were tired of supporting them. As a result, they often fell pregnant at a young thus adding to their burdens. In short, the study revealed that the orphaned learners from Shamavunga circuit had little or no time for their schoolwork, hence their poor academic performance.

5.3.1.2 Reasons for orphaned learners' poor academic performance according to the educators

The study also revealed that, according to the educators, orphaned learners perform poorly in their academics. One of the main reasons for this was the fact that they either came from child-headed households or else they headed the household themselves and looked after their siblings. This often resulted in their missing their examinations because there was no one with whom they could leave their siblings in critical situations. The case of an orphaned learner who was not able to write her examination because she had to take her sick younger sister to the clinic is illustrative and heart-breaking. Although the principal had instructed that the learner be given an opportunity to write the examination, the learner did not do well because she did not have sufficient time in which to study as she had to take care of her siblings. The study also showed that, when orphans have lost one or both of their parents while still young and have no relatives or foster care parents to take care of them, they become adults and often have to take on the responsibility of looking after their siblings. This, in turn, affects their academic performance.

The study also highlighted that, when an orphaned learner lives alone between the ages of 13 and 18, and is a girl, she often ends up being sexual abused and becomes

pregnant, having a child of her own at a young age. This results in these girls not perform well academically. The fact that the majority of orphaned learners do not have older people to guide and motivate them is another reason why they do not perform well academically.

5.3.2 Sub-theme Two: Challenges experienced by orphaned learners at school and at homes

5.3.2.1 Challenges experienced by orphaned learners at school and at homes according to the learners

The study established that orphaned learners are often not comfortable attending school together with non-orphaned learners because of the type of treatment they receive from the non-orphaned learners. Accordingly, they are not treated well by these non-orphaned learners. The study also revealed that orphaned learners often experience emotional difficulties after losing a parent/parents and they are sometimes teased by their classmates for being orphans. The study also found that some of the orphaned learners did not have shoes to wear and, thus, they were forced to go to school barefoot and were laughed at the other non-orphaned learners. The researcher) observation during the data collection stage of the study confirmed that almost all of the orphaned learners were wearing tattered and torn uniforms. During the conversations with the sampled orphaned learners, the researcher was touched when some of the orphaned learners burst into tears as they recalled their nasty experiences.

Revelations from the orphaned learners suggested that some of them were the heads of their families (child-headed) and that they lived in shacks (small houses built without cement). Thus, when it rains their uniforms and books got wet and they were not able to come to school. The study found that the orphaned learners were not open with their educators and/or their peers about their difficulties because their educators and fellow learners often started to segregate them and call them names.

In addition, the non-orphaned learners did not want to share their desk with the orphaned learners. The responses of the orphaned learners in this category also revealed that the community did not consider the orphans in respect of the RDP houses that the government is building for the needy. In fact, one of the orphaned learner participants stated that *“They are biased, they don’t care about us.”*

5.3.2.2 Challenges experienced by orphaned learners at school and at home according to the educators

This study revealed that the reality that the orphaned learners were without parental care and often without the guidance of older people constituted a huge problem for them to be without guidance, encouragement and discipline. There is no doubt that this impacted adversely on their academic performance. In addition, the absence of biological parents also made it difficult for the educators to discipline the orphaned learners because so many were acting as heads of their families (child-headed households) and, therefore, considered themselves as adults.

The loss of their parents meant that the orphaned learners do not enjoy the parental care and advice about life, love health and education that their counterparts receive from their parents. In line with the findings of Davids, Nkululeku, Mfecane, Skinner and Ratele (2006), the participant educators in this study revealed that the orphans tended to rely heavily on public advice and assistance in respect of education and on public sources of information. Unfortunately, all of these factors had a negative impact on their academic performance.

The participant educators were of the view that, when a learner is left alone with his/her siblings, the learner is forced to become an adult has to take care of the other siblings and assume the responsibility for them instead of concentrating on school activities and, hence, the poor academic performance. The educators’ assumption is confirmed by the human need theory which states that parental absence may be harmful for learners and may affect their academic performance. According to human need theory

states, human needs, including those of children are few, finite and constant in all cultures. However, for learners the absence of parents would mean that the learners' needs may not be met. This may result in, among other things, the learners being academically unproductive. At this point, the needs of learners, like any other person, should be understood in the context of Abram Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Norwood 2009:1). This hierarchy of needs divides human needs into psychological, safety, belongingness, self-esteem and self-actualisation needs.

These needs are hierarchically arranged such that the fulfilment of the lower needs propels the individual to the next level (Jerome 2013). Those learners who left alone often do not perform academically and they end up dropping out of school to find work, often in order to provide food for their siblings. Critical emancipatory theorists believe that every person has the potential to become whatever he/she wishes to become as long as that person (orphan) is given the resources (educators and caregivers) required to enable him/her to perform and achieve. In view of the fact that the orphaned learners may be said to be marginalised, CET was deemed to be relevant to their situation as it was felt it would inform the researcher about the learners' orphanhood mentality and their negative thinking that it is not possible for them to achieve good marks at school. They tend to regard education as difficult and intended for both the non-orphaned learners and learners who come from affluent homes.

Literature confirms that orphanhood is a social challenge with the orphaned learners ending up dropping out of school because they do not have the support of older people. Although some of the orphaned learners did ask their neighbours to assist and support them, their neighbours were sometimes too busy to help them or they did not want anything to do their orphaned neighbours because of how their parents' death. Thus, the academic performance of those orphaned learners who have to look after their siblings and who are responsible is affected. The foster care grant is regarded as an important way out of solving their problems or affording food because of the amount involved (R960) which they consider to be a large amount of money. Unfortunately, however, it sometimes causes further problems because some of them consider it to

be such a large amount of money that they drop out of school.

5.3.2.3 Challenges experienced by orphaned learners at school and at home according to the guardians

It emerged from the interviews with the guardian participants that it is not easy for grandparents to raise their orphaned grandchildren after the death of their parents. In the main the grandparents lacked the skills to deal with the post traumatic experiences of the orphans. The participants reported how they had assisted their children before they had died in the presence of the orphans and that these experiences had been extremely traumatic for the orphans.

The guardian participants indicated that they had to be careful about speaking to the orphans about their deceased parents because, as the study showed, some of the orphaned learners had sometimes behaved strangely and attempted suicide after being told these stories, especially those about how their parents had died. The researcher was of the view that this may be the cause of the orphaned learners' poor academic performance because a psychological imbalance in the learners may have resulted. Dealing with and parenting orphans is a challenge and even more of a challenge if they are of school-going age.

The guardian participants indicated unambiguously that they are not coping well with the orphaned learners because they often looked for too much attention to such an extent that they even told the grandparents that they were not their parents and had no right to tell them what to do. This behaviour, in turn, also impacted negatively on their academic performance because, in the main, to excel academically require parents who provide counsel, motivate and support learners. In addition, it also seemed that the orphaned learners did not perform well academically because their guardian parents (participants) were not able to assist them as they are uneducated.

5.3.3 Sub-theme Three: Educators' perceptions of orphaned learners in classroom

5.3.3.1 Educators' perceptions of orphaned learners in the classroom according to the learners

This study revealed that the way in some educators treated the orphaned learners spoke of a negative attitude towards the orphaned learners on the part of the educators. It was easy for the orphaned learners to identify those educators with a positive attitude towards them as they treated them well. For this reason, they preferred to go to these educators whenever they had problem because these educators were prepared to listen to them. According to the educator participants, orphaned learners did not bother to go to those educators who clearly did not care about them for help even if they had a problem. In short, the study showed that the orphaned learners were willing to expose themselves and discuss issues, including very personal issues, with educators who treated them well, in other words, those educators whom they regarded as 'trusted educators.

5.3.3.2 Educators' perceptions of orphaned learners in classroom according to the educators

This study revealed that the educators perceived the orphaned learners as displaying unruly behaviour and not doing well academically. Such unruly behaviour included making a noise in the class during lessons, bullying other learners and seeking attention from both the educators and their fellow learners. The study also found that the absence of parental involvement and supervision impacted negatively on the academic performance of the orphaned learners.

5.3.4 Sub-theme Four: Improving the academic performance of orphaned learners

5.3.4.1 Improving the academic performance of orphaned learners according to the

learners

The study highlighted the fact that, if the orphaned learners were to improve their academic performance, they would have to be disciplined, develop a positive attitude towards their studies and engage in their studies without waiting for the assistance of their educators and/or caregivers. The finding is supported by Palmary and Moat (2002), who describe resilience in the context of young people as the ability of young people to survive and succeed (make successful adaptations despite exposure to high risk conditions). Victor (2003) also discusses resilience in this context by mentioning that children are capable of overcoming difficult, challenging and even dangerous situations and become caring, competent and confident human beings. He described such children as resilient because they manage to exceed expectations, cope well with stress and bounce back effectively from traumatic experiences such as the loss of their parents.

The study also revealed that, if their academic performance is to improve, it is vital that educators support the orphaned learners by understanding them and making allowances for their weakness, even if the orphans sometimes do not behave well and/or seek too much attention. Nevertheless, educators should not shout them but should demonstrate listening skills. The educators should follow up if the orphaned learners do not come to school as there may be serious challenges preventing them from doing so. The study also revealed that orphaned learners are sometimes afraid to open up to their educators even if they are facing serious challenges because the educators will talk about this to other educators. The studies highlighted that educators should embrace the orphaned learners and treat them as their own children. In addition, their caregivers also should not abuse them either verbally or physically. As orphans they are vulnerable to all types of abuse, for example physical, emotional, sexual and verbal abuse.

The study revealed that, for their academic performance to improve, the community should embrace all learners, including orphaned learners. Niala's (2013) quote, "nature brings the child but the community raises a child", supports this finding. The study

further highlighted that, although a person does not own a child because the child is his/hers, but that any child is still her/his child even if the child is not the person's biological child. One of the participants notes that orphaned learners should see a *“person of the same age as their mother as their ‘mother’ and a man of the same age as their father as ‘father’”* as this would ensure that they would heed the advice of other people. This, in turn, should benefit them generally and also their academic performance.

5.3.4.2 Improving the academic performance of orphaned learners according to the educators

The study found that the educator participants were of the opinion that the educators and the school principals should adopt the orphaned learners as their own children as this would improve their academic performance. The study also revealed that, in the event of the death of a child's parents, the community should take care of the orphans. If this were practised in the community, it would benefit the orphans and improve their academic performance. This was highlighted by one of the educator participants who had adopted an orphaned learner boy who had been in Grade 8 at the time. The reason she had adopted the boy was that he had cried while explaining to her that he was being abused physically by his brother who had dropped out of school. The educator had taken him into her house and treated him as her own. The academic performance of the orphaned learner had improved and, at the time of the study, he was in Grade 12.

5.3.5 Sub-theme Five: How can government intervene to improve the academic performance of orphaned learners?

5.3.5.1 How can a government intervene to improve the academic performance of orphaned learners according to the learners?

According to the orphaned learner participants the government should establish

more orphanage, build schools for orphans and also specifically train educators to teach orphaned learners. The researcher observed that there were no orphanages in the region where the study was conducted, just two drop-in centres with poor facilities, for example, no water and no food, and a lack of trained workers.

The participants expressed the view that, as orphaned learners, they should have a place that they could call home and that there should be trained people to teach them separately as orphans. In a study conducted by Wood and Goba (2011) a LO educator participant revealed that, at the school at which she taught, the teachers were not permitted to choose the learning areas with which they were comfortable but that they were given any learning area to teach and had no choice in the matter. This, in turn, implies that an educator may not be happy to teach life orientation but that the educator would not have any choice but to try to cope with the accompanying stressors. Accordingly, even if an educator does not possess the complete skill set or competency required to teach orphaned learners, the educator may be forced to teach them and may, as a result, not treat them properly.

A participant in Wood and Goba's (2011) study complained about the lack of support and cooperation afforded to him/her as a Life Orientation educator by the Department of Education. Wood and Goba also revealed that, despite the fact that the Department of Education employs specialists such as psychologists and social workers to address the wellbeing of the learners, these services are not, in fact, made available to the schools. The study highlighted that the LO teachers are in need of expert assistance in order to deal with the educational repercussions of the social problem experienced by orphaned learners.

5.3.5.2 How can government intervene to improve the academic performance of orphaned learners according to the educators?

The educator participants mentioned that government should work together with the community through the social workers. There should be a programme of managing these orphans put in place whereby an orphan would receive the foster care under the aegis of the social worker who would manage and monitor the situation. The participant

suggested that the social worker should bring the orphaned learners together in a group and talk to them on a regular basis. The study found that this was clearly not the case, as the orphaned learner participants did not know the social worker. In addition, the government, through the social workers, should encourage the orphaned learners by giving them incentives and motivating them, for example, if they performed well academically they would receive a bursary.

5.3.5.3 How may government intervene to improve the academic performance of orphaned learners according to the guardians?

The study highlighted that if the orphaned learners are not disciplined and they are allowed to behave as they wish, in all likelihood their academic performance will deteriorate. The guardian participants recommended that the government should bring back corporal punishment because the school is the only place which disciplines learners. In addition, the abolition of corporal punishment was affecting the academic performance of the orphaned learners while the guardians were not able to discipline them.

5.3.6 Observation findings

The researcher's during the observations are discussed below.

5.3.6.1 Sub-theme 1: Educators' interaction with orphaned learners

The researcher observed that the majority of the orphaned learners did not take part in school activities and that many of them were not wearing school uniform.

Much noise was observed during lessons across all the sampled grades with the main culprits being the orphaned learners. It was also observed that most of the learners who were wearing torn uniforms and tattered shoes were orphans. Additional observations indicated that, during break, the first learners who ran when the siren rang were the orphans who were rushing to be the first to receive the food supplied through the feeding scheme. It was also observed that the majority of the orphaned learners attended school until break time and, after break, they disappeared. It was

concluded that they were at school for the food provided and, after eating, they went home.

The researcher also observed the happiness on the part of the educators when the siren rang to signal the end of a lesson with the educators putting down the chalk immediately even if they had still been writing on the board. This was probably the result of the excessive noise made by the learners which made it impossible to continue. It was also observed that the educators across the grades did not recognise the learners as, instead of calling learners by their names when posing a question, the educators simply pointed a finger at a specific learner.

5.3.6.2 Sub-theme 2: The attitude/behaviour of the orphaned learners

The absenteeism rate among the orphaned learners was observed to be high in comparison with that of the other learners. It was found that the level of noise varied from grade to grade. For example, the Grade 10 learners made more noise as compared to the Grade 11 while the Grade 12 class was relatively quiet with the learners making the least noise.

In presenting a summary of study findings, the researcher referred to the research questions:

- How are orphaned learners at high schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo province performing academically?
- What are the challenges experienced by orphaned learners at schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo?
- How do educators perceive the academic performance of orphaned learners at schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo?
- How do orphaned learners perceive their own academic performance?
- What are the challenges which orphaned learners face at home that impact

on their academic performance?

5.4.1 How are orphaned learners at high schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo province performing academically?

The orphaned learners themselves who participated in this revealed study that their academic performance was poor, thus providing evidence that the orphaned learners in high schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo may be said to be performing poorly. The responses of the sampled orphaned learners indicated some of the reasons for this poor academic performance. One of the reasons cited was the lack of financial support from their caregivers. The study revealed that some of the orphaned learners' guardian caregivers were misusing the orphaned learners' grants they received as they were responsible for taking care of the orphaned learners. They often used it for their own benefit and not for that of the orphans. This, in fact, was the reason why many of the orphaned learners did not have a school uniform and were not able to pay for the extra lessons or buy food. These problems not only impacted negatively on the academic performance of the orphaned learners but also highlighted the extent to which they missed their parents.

The findings above agree with those of the study conducted by Magampa (2014) which indicated that, as parents are the financial providers in families, their deaths often cause economic disruption, especially if they were the breadwinners. This, in turn, often leads to poverty, overcrowding and a lack of the educational facilities necessary for learners. This study also revealed that orphaned learners are often affected by poverty after the death of their parents to such an extent that they have to rely on feeding scheme for the food provided at school. While at school they often had consider the situation at home, for example, what they were going to eat with their siblings after school. This finding is in line with Mwona's (2015) study which revealed that, although school feeding schemes are useful, learners are not often provided with enough food at school.

As narrated by the orphaned learner participants, the study highlighted that the educators often did not treat the orphaned learners properly, for example they called the orphaned learners names. They brought up their past mistakes and labelled them as orphans as the reason for their bad behaviour. The study suggested that the educators should act as parents to all the learners, including the orphaned learners. Chimhenga's (2016) study supports the suggestion made in this study to the effect that educators need to understand and assist orphaned learners with behavioural problems in the classroom if their academic performance is of interest. Chimhenga (2016) indicates that educators should create opportunities to understand and assist with the problem behaviour of the orphaned learners in the classroom. In this study, the researcher was of the view that unruly behaviour on the part of the orphaned learners may develop if the learners do not receive support from their educators, caregivers and peers. The fact that the orphaned learners in the study were treated badly by the educators, who called them names and constantly reminded them of their past mistakes, clearly played an important role in the orphaned learners' unruly behaviour in class and could have been one of the reasons for their poor academic performance.

The educator participants revealed that the majority of the orphaned learners either lived in child-headed households or were themselves the heads of households and, hence, there were no older people in their lives to guide them and to monitor them. Some of them were the breadwinners and responsible for taking care of their siblings despite their own young age. Hence, they often did not complete their schoolwork and neither did they attend school regularly because they were responsible for heading the family. This study, thus, highlighted that the lack of parental involvement due to death of the parents may lead to poor academic performance on the part of the orphans. Thus, this study is in line with human need theory in terms of which Daniel (2016) indicates that parents are extremely important agents in relation to meeting their children's overall needs. Thus, their absence means that these needs will remain unmet and, as a result, the children's academic performance may be affected. In line with Guest's (2001) study, this study found that the early loss of the significant parent(s) may render orphaned learners more susceptible to stress. In the adolescent the death

of a parent is often associated with adverse effects such as an increase in later emotional problems, particularly, as Sadock and Sadock (2003) note, a susceptibility to depression. Both stress and depression may adversely affect and depreciate a learner's mental capacity, thus resulting in unruly behaviour and poor academic results. It may, therefore, be concluded that when parents are absent, for example, due to death, learners will perform poorly because there is no one available to monitor them as they learn. It was apparent in this study that parents and support from educators constituted major resources that learners require in order to perform well with the study highlighting that, when learners do not have the parental support because their parents have died, this will impact negatively on their academic achievements.

5.4.2 What are the challenges experienced by orphaned learners at schools in the Shamavunga Circuit in Limpopo?

One of the challenges that the orphaned learners faced was that they were often undermined by the non-orphaned learners who also did not show them any respect. It was also clear from the study that the orphaned learners were separated from other learners by both the educators and the non-orphaned learners. The orphaned learner participants indicated that, as orphans, they were not comfortable attending school with non-orphans because their uniforms were torn and their shoes were tattered. They felt embarrassed because the non-orphans laughed at them because of their orphanhood. The non-orphaned learners were obviously demonstrating a negative attitude towards them. Maltreatment was another challenge they faced with this maltreatment impacting adversely on their academic performance.

The study found that orphaned learners in high schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo were performing poorly because they were not being properly treated well by their educators, their care-givers and their peers. This finding is in line with what Gindis' (2012) recommendation that educators and caregivers should remember that the grieving process for learners is extremely difficult and they should try to be helpful by supporting them in their grieving process. With this finding the researcher stressed

that it was clear from the narratives of the orphaned learner participants that the educators were acting *in loco parentis*. This failure of both educators and caregivers further suggested that the orphaned learners' needs were not being met and that they lacked the support required for them to be successful in their academic work. This is in line with critical emancipatory theory, one of the theoretical frameworks used in this study. According to Mthiyane (2015), this theory emphasises that a person has the potential of becoming whatever he/she so wishes to become as long as that person (orphan) is given the resources required to enable him/her to perform and achieve.

According to the sampled educators, the orphaned learners were not open to disclosing their problem(s) and, therefore, it was not easy for the educators to assist the orphan learners because they were not prepared to disclose their problems. The researcher's view was that the orphaned learners did not want to talk about their problems because of the maltreatment that they received from some of the educators. Gilo (2017) is of the opinion that the lack of psychological support from individuals, communities, government and non-government organisations contribute to the poor academic achievement of orphaned learners. In line with this assertion of Gilo (2017), the researcher also concluded the lack of psychological support from the orphaned learners' educators and peers were among the factors that resulted in the poor academic performance of orphaned learners. Although Wood and Goba's (2011) finding differed slightly from this study's finding in respect of the maltreatment of orphaned learners, it did suggest that the educators' lack of training in working with orphaned learners resulted in their maltreating learners. On the other hand, in complete agreement with the findings of Wood and Goba (2011), this study also found that some of the educator participants in this study were teaching subjects that were not their subject areas. This, in turn, affected the academic performance of the learners, including the orphaned learners, while also leading to frustration and a decline in job satisfaction on the part of the educators themselves.

5.4.3 How do the educators perceive the academic performance of orphaned learners at schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo?

It emerged from the study that the educators perceived the orphaned learners' academic performance as unsatisfactory. In addition, the educators found that the orphaned learners' unruly behaviour and not doing their schoolwork constituted unpleasant challenges in the learning and teaching process. In addition, the educators were seriously concern about the way in which the majority of the orphaned learners disturbed classes.

The educator participants in the study noted that giving support to orphaned learners did indeed result in an improvement in academic performance for some, although it did not work for many of the orphaned learners they taught. The educators in the sampled school believed that some of the orphaned learners saw themselves as adults and, thus, correcting them via some form of support, for example, advice, was a fruitless exercise. The researcher suspected that this may have been the reason why some of the educators distanced themselves from the orphaned learners.

Nonetheless, the study revealed that not all the orphaned learners were discouraged by being orphans and that some were willing to forget their pasts and move forward to reach their goals. Thus, the researcher concluded that, if the orphaned learners could be supported, loved and guided in both their home environment and at school, some of them would do well and keep their dreams alive despite their parents' deaths.

5.4.4 What are the challenges experienced by the orphaned learners at home in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo?

The study revealed that some of the orphaned learners lived in shacks that provided little or no protection against the rain and cold weather. The orphaned learner participants who lived in shacks revealed that they could do not attend school on rainy because their books and uniforms were wet. In addition, the death of their parents meant that their needs were probably not being met which resulted in, among

other things, the learners being academically unproductive. It is important that the needs of learners, as with any other person, are understood in the context of Abram Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This hierarchy of needs divides human needs into psychological, safety, belongingness, self-esteem and self-actualisation needs. These needs are hierarchically arranged such that the fulfilment of the lower level needs propels the individual to the next level (Jerome 2013). All humans need to live in safe environments where their lives are not threatened. The orphaned learners in this study expressed a greater desire to live in protected and safe place than had been found in earlier studies, for example, the study of Hendrick and Magano (2014). Unfortunately, the death of the parents means that, in all likelihood, orphaned learners' need to live in a safe environment is not met with this constituting one of the challenges that result in orphaned learners not performing academically.

The study revealed that some of the orphaned learners were being raised by grandparents after the death of their parents. The majority of the grandparent guardian participants revealed that they did not possess the skills required to deal with posttraumatic experiences of the orphaned learners. In addition, most of the grandparents of the orphaned learners sampled in this study were illiterates and, therefore, they were not able to assist with either homework or assignments nor were they able to provide useful academic and other advice that may have helped to improve the orphaned learners' schooling and general living. This finding is in agreement with the study of Armstrong (2005), which argued that, although children may be well cared for by their grandparents these grandparents were old and would probably die, leaving the children without a guardian once again.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The major limitation of this study was that of exclusion which was inevitable because of the method of sampling that was used. Orphans below the age of 14 years and above the age of 17 years were not selected as the study aimed to focus primarily mainly on learners from Grades 10 to 12 (usually in the age range of between 15 to

17 years) and, hence, the exclusion of the other age groups. In addition, orphans who were not attending school at the time of the study as well as who did not fall under the Shamavunga Circuit to which the study was delimited were also not included in the study. Accordingly, the researcher noted that the readers of this research report may argue that the sample was extremely small. However, this may be debatable as the researcher emphasises that the sample (10 learners, 3 guardians and 3 educators) was ideal for the purposes of the study which was a qualitative study. In addition, despite the lack of the generalizability of the study findings, the findings of this study may, nevertheless, be the basis for future, similar or related studies.

5.6 Recommendations and future research direction

In view of the fact that the study focused on orphaned learners at high schools only, it was, therefore, not possible to explore the impact of orphanhood on primary school learners and learners at the post-secondary level. It is, therefore, suggested that future studies focus on these segments of learners in the interests of a complete understanding of the impact, nature and extent of orphanhood on the academic performance of orphaned learners/students. In addition, given the impact of poverty and other socio-economic hardships on the orphaned learners' schooling and, in particular, their academic performance, it is recommended that longitudinal studies be conducted to explore the psychosocial impact of orphanhood on the academic performance of orphaned learner as the findings of this study as well as the literature review highlighted this crucial issue.

Based on the findings of this study the researcher proposes the following specific recommendations:

At school level

- School teachers and principals should be given a mandate to assist orphaned learners by seeking donations from non-governmental organisations (NGO) and other interested parties.

- Schools should be encouraged to work closely with the guardians of orphaned learners so as to improve the performance of these learners.
- More workshops should be conducted to empower educators to effectively manage the educational and psychosocial needs of the learners.
- Orphaned learners should be identified and noted in various areas of the country so that assistance may be sought specifically for their benefit.

At the government level

- The government should ensure that drop-in centres and orphanages are established, particularly in the rural areas, so as to accommodate and cater for orphaned learners.
- The government should formulate policies that will ensure that the emotional needs of orphaned learners are met.
- The curriculum for educator training should be adapted to include basic counselling and related skills.
- The government should ensure that there are therapeutic services provided in all areas which caregivers may access to ensure the orphaned learners' emotional health.
- The government should make available alternative means of academic assistance in relation to homework as the majority of the orphaned learners are under the guardianship of illiterate grandparents.

At community level

The African values that view “every child as every parent’s child” should be restored and encouraged. Such positive African values could help minimise the negative impact

of orphanhood on learners. Accordingly, the researcher recommends the establishment of support groups for the guardians of orphaned learners, in particular, the grandparents, in order to provide them with emotional support. In addition, community-based groups should be formed to help orphaned learners with school related work, especially those living with their grandparents who have not received adequate schooling.

5.6 Conclusion

The study concluded that the main reasons why orphaned learners perform poorly in their school work include the following: heavy adult responsibilities, lack of financial and moral support and abuse by their relatives and caregivers. Based on the insights gained from this study the researcher argued that, in the main, educators are not well trained to support and identify the challenges faced by orphaned learners. In the light of this, the researcher emphasised that educators should treat orphaned learners with kindness instead of calling them names as was revealed by many of the participants in this study. It is asserted that should the above concerns be addressed there is every likelihood that orphaned learners would perform extremely well in their academic work. They may even do as well as or even better than the non-orphaned learners because of the zeal, ability and capabilities that some of them exhibited despite the absence of parents and the responsibilities of fending for themselves and their siblings, as was the case with some of the orphaned learners.

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UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

2017/05/17

Dear Mrs Ringani,

REC Ref#: 2017/05/17/44146841/28/MC

Name: Mrs TG Ringani

Student#: 44146841

**Decision: Ethics Approval from
2017/05/17 to 2020/05/17**

Researcher: Name: Mrs TG Ringani
Telephone#: 0782654758
E-mail address: lulanim6@gmail.com

Supervisor: Name: Dr C Potokri
Telephone#: 0842671740
E-mail address: cnuvie@gmail.com

Working title of research:

The academic performance of orphaned learners at High Schools in Shamavunga circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Qualification: M Ed in Education Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for 3 years.

The medium risk application was reviewed by the College of Education Ethics Review Committee on 2017/05/17 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The decision was approved on 2017/05/17.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is

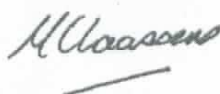
relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date 2020/05/17. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number 2017/05/17/44146841/28/MC should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Signature

Chair of CEDU ERC: Dr M Claassens

E-mail: mcdtc@netactive.co.za

Tel: (012) 429 8750



Signature

Executive Dean: Prof VI McKay

E-mail: mckayvi@unisa.ac.za

Tel: (012) 429-4979

URERC 25.04.17 - Decision template (V2) - Approve

University of South Africa
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LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SHAMAVUNGA CIRCUIT
MOPANI DISTRICT

Enq: Ringani TP/Rivisi T.N
Tel: 015 812 1131

29 June 2017

Ms Ringani T.G
P O Box 3244
Giyani
0826

Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT EDUCATION RESEARCH IN SHAMAVUNGA CIRCUIT.

1. The above matter bears reference.
2. Kindly note that your request for permission to conduct educational research at High Schools of Shamavunga Circuit has been granted.
3. Thanking you in advance.

CHAUKE TM
CIRCUIT MANAGER

SHAMAVUNGA CIRCUIT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
MOPANI DISTRICT, Private Bag X 9654 GIYANI, 0826
Tel 015812 1131

The heartland of Southern Africa – development is about people



LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Ref: 2/2/2

Enq: KS Maswanganye

Date: 19 June 2017

Ms Ringani TG

P O Box 3244

GIYANI

0826

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN SHAMAVUNGA CIRCUITS

1. The above matter refers.
2. We acknowledge your letter of request to conduct educational research under the title: "The academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools in Shamavunga Circuit under Mopani District".
3. Permission is granted to conduct the research on the above topic. It should however be noted that class attendance should not be disturbed.
4. Hope you find this to be in order.


DISTRICT DIRECTOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOPANI DISTRICT: Private Bag X 578 GIYANI, 0826
Tel 015 811 7700 Fax No. 015 812 3412 or 015 812 1689

The heartland of Southern Africa – development is about people

**APPENDIX D: LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION FROM THE SELECTED
HIGH SCHOOL IN THE SHAMAVUNGA CIRCUIT, MOPANI, LIMPOPO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Enq: T.G RINGANI

Cel: 078 265 4758

Email: lulanim6@gmail.com

P O BOX 3244

Giyani

0826

-----/-----/ 2017

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL:
T.G RINGANI PERSAL NUMBER: 82649677**

Title of the research:

***The academic performance of orphaned learners at high school in
Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa***

The matter above refers:

1. I, Tsakani Gladys Ringani, Identity Number 6804180427089, hereby request permission to conduct research at your school during June and July 2017.
2. The title of my research is ***The academic performance of orphaned learners at high school in Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa***

3. I am currently registered with the University of South Africa for a Master's Degree Specialising in Educational Management, Student Number 4414 684 1. My supervisor is Dr O.C Potokri (Cell) 084 267 1740 and email address; cnuvie@gmail.com

4. The main aim of the study is to investigate the perceptions of educators and learners of the academic performance of orphaned learners at secondary schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo province.

5. Kindly note that I wish to involve your school due to the fact that I deemed it is the most suitable for participation in this study. The school was purposefully selected for the study as it would seem it will provide rich data for this qualitative study as it is situated in a rural village and is within easy reach of the researcher.

5. Having been an educator myself in a secondary school for the past ten years, my observation has been that FET band orphaned learners, especially from the rural villages, do not perform as well as their non-orphaned counterparts. In addition, it would seem that they have a negative attitude towards themselves as orphans.

6. The following main research question was formulated for the purposes of the study: What are the perceptions of learners and educators about the academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools in the Shamavunga circuit, Limpopo province?

7. This study will contribute towards my fulfilling the requirements for a Master's Degree in Education.

8. It is hoped that the findings from the study will help improve the poor academic performance of orphaned learners and also address their emotional and behavioural problems such as negative behaviour, isolation, rejection, shame, unhappiness, poor self-esteem, sensitivity, a lack of confidence, ill health and absenteeism. Focus group interviews will be conducted with the learners and in-depth interviews will be conducted with their educators and guardians to order to collect the requisite data.

9. I do not foresee any risk involved in participation in the study except for possible emotional disturbances given the sensitive nature of the study, in particular, where the age of the learners is considered. However, to mitigate this risk, I intend to involve a local social worker during the interviews to deal with the emotional state of

participants should they become emotionally disturbed during the interviews. The data collection process will not be conducted during the teaching and learning period but only during the afternoon between 14h30 and 16h00 depending on the school timetable.

10. Feedback will be provided after the printing out of the report after it has been approved.

11. In conducting this research I undertake to observe the rules of the Department of Education with regard to research as well as the Research Ethics Regulations of the University of South Africa (UNISA).

Find herein attached the following as documentary proof:

- (1) My proof of registration with the University of South Africa.
- (2) Testimonial from my supervisor, Dr O.C Potokri.
- (3) Letter granting me permission to conduct the research from the Limpopo Provincial Government Department of Education.

I look forward to your positive response.

Yours sincerely

Mrs TG Ringani

APPENDIX E: INFORMATION LETTER FOR EDUCATORS AND CONSENT

Enq: T.G RINGANI
Cel: 078 265 4758
Email: lulanim6@gmail.com

P O BOX 3244
Giyani
0826
-----/-----/ 2017

Dear prospective participant,

TITLE: *The academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools In Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa*

My name is Tsakani Gladys Ringani and I am conducting research under Dr O.C Potokri. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: ***The academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools In Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa.***

It is anticipated that this study collect information that may assist in the improving the academic performance of orphaned learners in secondary schools. It is also anticipated that, as a result of the study findings, orphaned learners will show more interest in their education. In addition, the study should help them to accept that, although they are orphans, they are still capable of excelling in their schooling.

I have chosen you to participate in the study on the basis of the information provided by the circuit manager of your school as well as the school principal. During my ten years of teaching in a secondary school I have observed that the majority of the learners in the rural villages do not have parents and, thus, some are heading the households while some live their grandparents. In the main, these learners do not perform well academically and sometimes they look down upon themselves. The educators who participated in previous studies were generally of the view that orphaned learners perform poorly when compared to non-orphaned learners.

You have been selected to participate in the study on the basis of your experiences in relation to the academic performance of orphaned learners as compared to that of non-orphaned learners. In addition, it was felt you are able identify the problems and/or challenges they experience in class. I would like one male and two female Grades 10 to 12 educators from your school to participate in the individual Interviews.

You will participate in the interviews as an individual. I will use an audio recorder during the interview session to enable me then to transcribe the information you provided. I will also take down notes during the interview.

The following questions will serve as guidelines for the questions that may be posed to Grade 10-12 educators:

- (1) How long have you been teaching as an educator and what have you noted with regard to the performance of orphaned learners in your subject?*
- (2) How does the performance of orphaned learners affect the performance of the school as a whole?*
- (3) What do you think are the factors which play a role in the orphaned learners not performing academically?*
- (4) Do you think government intervention may help? Give reasons for your answer.*
- (5) How do the orphaned learners behave in class?*
- (6) How may the performance of the orphaned learners be improved?*

The questions below will be posed to the guardians of the orphaned learners:

- (1) What is the relationship like between you and the orphaned learner and how long have you been living together?*
- (2) What do you think are the factors which play a role in your child not performing at school?*
- (3) How may your child's performance be improved?*
- (4) Do you think there are ways in which government may help to improve the academic performance of orphaned learner? Share these with me if you agree. If you disagree please give reasons.*

The interview is expected to last for 30 minutes only and you are encouraged to actively participate in the interview proceedings. It is very important to note is that your participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participate. If you do decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will also be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason.

As a participant in this study you will not receive any remuneration but, hopefully, by virtue of your participation you will gain an insight into the scientific research process which may be of importance later in your academic life as a frame of reference in the future. I do not believe there will be any risk arising from your participation. There may, however, be a measure of inconvenience to you because you will be asked to sacrifice your time between 14H00 and 15H00 to participate in two sessions, namely, the initial interview and the follow-up session.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The information that you will share will be regarded with the utmost confidentiality. You have the right to insist that your name not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will be aware of your involvement in this research study (*this measure refers to confidentiality*) and neither will anybody be able to link you to the answers you give (*this measure refers to anonymity*). Your answers will be assigned a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings (*this measure refers to confidentiality*).

The only person who will have access to your name is myself as, immediately after the data collection, you will be referred to as Respondent number 1, 2 or 3. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for ensuring that this research has been properly conducted, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study unless you give your permission for other people to see the records.

Kindly note that, with your permission as well as the permission of the learners who will take part in the focus group interviews and the discussions, I will audio record the entire session to enable me then transcribe the information for the purposes of analysis and to use in the discussion in the report which will be submitted to relevant stakeholders for approval.

Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes by other researchers, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. However, in any case your privacy will be protected in any publication of the information, for example, *a report of the study may be submitted for publication but the individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.*

The orphaned learners will participate in the focus group interviews during which they share ideas with the five other members of the group. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that the participants will not be linked to the information that they share during the focus groups, I am not able to guarantee that the other participants in the focus group will treat the information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all the participants to do so. It is for this reason that I will advise the participants not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus groups.

HOW THE RESEARCHER(S) WILL PROTECT THE SECURITY OF THE DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard in her residence at house 170, portion 4, Nyalalaan street, Kremetart, Giyani for future research or academic purposes while the electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further review and approval by the Research Ethics Board, if applicable.

After a period of five years the hard copies will be shredded by an electronic device and the electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive through the use of a relevant software programme.

You will not receive any reward for your participation in the study. As the interviews will be conducted at your school there are no costs anticipated.

This study has received written approval from the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee of the University of South Africa. A copy of the approval letter may be obtained from the researcher, if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH? If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please feel free to contact the researcher, Tsakani Gladys Ringani, on +27782654758 or +27798399818 or email address lulanim6@gmail.com

The findings will be available for five years after the completion of this study. Should you require any further information or you wish to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Tsakani Gladys Ringani on +27782654758 or +27798399818 or email address lulanim6@gmail.com

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr O.C Potokri Cell +27 84 267 174 and email address cnuvie@gmail.com

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in the study.

Thank you.

Tsakani Gladys Ringani

CONSENT SLIP (Return slip)

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation. I have read and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and I am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty. I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed in a

research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified. I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname: _____

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname: _____

Researcher's signature

Date

**APPENDIX F: INFORMATION LETTER FOR LEARNERS AND LEARNER
ASSENT**

Enq: T.G Ringani

Cell: 078 265 4758

Email: lulanim6@gmail.com

P O BOX 3244

Giyani

0826

02 May 2017

Dear prospective participant,

TITLE: *The academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools in Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa*

My name is Tsakani Gladys Ringani and I am conducting research under Dr O.C Potokri. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled ***The academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools in Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa***

The aim of the study is to collect information may could assist in improving the academic performance of orphaned learners in Shamavunga Circuit secondary schools. It is also anticipated that, as a result of the study, orphaned learners become more interested in their education and that this, in turn, may also empower them to accept themselves as orphans who, despite their orphanhood, still have the ability to excel in their schooling.

I have chosen you to participate in the study based on the information provided by the circuit manager of your school as well as the school principal. During the ten years of my teaching career in secondary schools I have observed that the majority of learners in the rural villages are orphans and that they do not perform well

academically. In addition, it would seem that, sometimes, some of them look down on themselves.

You have been selected to participate in this study because of your experiences of being an orphan and the various types of treatment meted out to by different stakeholders e.g. educators, co-learners and guardians. It is anticipated that the information that we will share will help you to improve your academic performance.

I require at least five male and five female Grades 10 to 12 orphaned learners to participate in the focus group interviews as one voice.

You will participate in this group of five boy and five girl learners. With your permission I will use an audio recorder to record the interview session to enable me to transcribe the information provided at the conclusion of the interview. In addition, I will also take down notes during the interview.

The following questions will serve as guidelines for the questions that may be posed during the focus group discussion:

(1) What have been your experiences at school and in your home environment as an orphan and a learner at the same time?

(2) What do you think are the factors which play a role in your not participating fully in the school work?

(3) How may your academic performance be improved?

(4) Do you think educators, guardians, and the government are the main reasons for your lack of performance? Give reasons for your answer.

(5) What do you think could be done to make you feel accepted both in school and outside of school to enable you to cope with being an orphan?

The interview is expected to last for about 40 minutes only. You will be encouraged to actively participate in your group. It is extremely important to note is that your participation in this study is voluntary and that you are under no obligation to consent to participation. However, if you do decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and without providing a reason.

As a participant in this study you will not receive any remuneration but, hopefully, by virtue of your participation you will gain an insight into scientific research which may be of importance later in your academic life as well as serving as a frame of reference in the future. I hope that the study will not place you at any risk whatsoever. It is anticipated that there may be a level of inconvenience for you as you will have to sacrifice your time to participate in two sessions – the initial interview and the follow-up session.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The information that you share with me will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and you have the right to insist that your name not be recorded anywhere, that no one, with the exception of the researcher and identified members of the research team, will be aware of your involvement in this research (*this measure refers to confidentiality*) and that no one will be able to link you to the answers you have given (*this measure refers to anonymity*).

Your answers will be assigned a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings (*this measure refers to confidentiality*).

The only person who will have access to your name is myself, as the researcher, as, immediately after the collection of the data, you will be referred to as Respondent numbers 1 to 6. Your answers may be reviewed by the people responsible for ensuring that the research has been conducted properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, any records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes by other researchers, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. However, whatever the case your privacy will be protected in any publication of the information, for example, *a report of the study may be submitted for publication, but the individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.*

You will participate in the focus group interview during which you will share ideas within the group of five. While the researcher will make every effort to ensure that you will not be linked to the information that you share during the focus group, I am, however, not able to guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat the information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all the participants to do so. It is for this reason that I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF THE DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard in her residence at house 170, portion 4, Kremetart, Giyani for future research or academic purposes while the electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further review by the Research Ethics Committee and approval if applicable.

After a period of five years the hard copies will be shredded by an electronic device and the electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive through the use of a relevant software programme.

You will not receive any reward for your participation in the study. The interviews will be conducted at your school so there are no costs anticipated. This study has received the written approval of the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee of the University of South Africa. A copy of the letter of approval may be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please feel free to contact the researcher, Tsakani Gladys Ringani on +27782654758 or +27798399818 or email address lulanim6@gmail.com

The findings will be available for five years after the completion of this study. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Tsakani Gladys Ringani on +27782654758 or +27798399818 or email address lulanim6@gmail.com

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr O.C Potokri on Cell +27 84 267 174 and email address cnuvie@gmail.com

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in the study.

Thank you.

Tsakani Gladys Ringani (Names)

Name of learner/participant: _____

Researcher's name (print)

Researcher's signature

Date

APPENDIX G: LETTER TO REQUEST PERMISSION FROM GUARDIANS OF ORPHANED LEARNERS

Enq: T.G Ringani
Cel: 078 265 4758
Email: lulanim6@gmail.com

P O BOX 3244
Giyani
0826
-----/----/2017

Dear Guardians

Your ward is invited to participate in a study entitled: ***The academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools In Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa***

I am undertaking this study as part of my master's research at the University of South Africa. The purpose of the study is to investigate the perceptions of educators and learners of the academic performance of secondary schools in the Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo province.

The possible benefits of the study include an improvement in the academic performance of orphaned learners. I am requesting your permission to include your ward in this study because of his/her experiences of life without parents. I expect to have other children participating in the study. If you allow your child to participate; I shall request him/her to take part in a group interview.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and may be identified with your ward will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Your ward's responses will not be linked to his/her name, your name or the school's name in any written or verbal report based on the study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only.

I do not foresee any risk involved with the exception of possible emotional disturbance given the sensitive nature of the study, in particular, when the age of the learners is taken into account. In order to address this, I will involve a local social

worker during the focus group interviews to deal with any emotional disturbances that the participants may experience during the interviews.

Your child will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study. However, it is hoped that the findings may be of benefit to education and that this, in turn, will assist in improving the academic performance of orphaned learners. Neither your ward nor you will receive any type of payment for his/her participation in this study.

Your ward's participation in this study is voluntary. Your ward is free to decline to participate in the study or to withdraw from the study at any time. Refusal to participate in the study or withdrawal from the study will not affect the learner in any way. Similarly, you are free to allow your ward to be in the study now and then change your mind at a later date without any penalty. The study will take place during regular classroom activities. However, if the interviews take place at the time the learners are supposed to be studying the prior approval of the school and your ward's teacher will be obtained.

In addition to your permission, your ward must also agree to participate in the study. Both you and your ward will also be asked to sign the assent form which accompanies this letter. If your ward does not wish to participate in the study, he/she will not be included in the study and there will be no penalty. The information gathered from the study and your ward's participation in the study will be stored securely on hard copies in a locked cupboard at my house while the electronic copies will be stored on a password locked computer for five years after the study. Thereafter, the records will be erased. Kindly note that with your permission, as well as that of your ward, I will audio record the focus group interviews and discussions.

PRIVACY AND COFIDENTIALITY

The information that your ward shares with me will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and you have the right to insist that your ward's name will not be recorded anywhere, that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about his/her involvement in this research (*this measure refers to confidentiality*) and that no one will be able to link his/her name to the answers the learner gave (*this measure refers to anonymity*). The answers will

be assigned a code number or a pseudonym and they will be referred to in this way

in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings (*this measure refers to confidentiality*).

The only person who will have access to the learners' names will be myself as, immediately after the collection of the data, they will be referred to as Respondent numbers 1 to 6. Their answers may be reviewed by the people responsible for ensuring that research has been conducted properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify them will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give your permission for other people to see the records.

Their anonymous data may be used for other purposes by other researchers, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. However, in such a case their privacy will be protected in any publication of the information, for example, *a report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.*

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Tsakani Gladys Ringani on +27782654758 or +27798399818 or email address lulanim6@gmail.com Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr O.C Potokri on Cell +27 84 267 174 or email address cnuvie@gmail.com

You are being asked to make a decision about allowing your ward to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and that you have decided to allow him/her to participate in the study. You may keep a copy of this letter.

Name of learner: _____

_____	_____	_____
Parent/guardian's name	Parent/guardian's sign	Date

_____	_____	_____
Researcher's name	Researcher's sign	Date

APPENDIX H: OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT

OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT

For the lessons that will be observed by the researcher the observation instrument presented below will be used as basis. It will be given to the educator for perusal before the observation takes place:

SECTION A: [CLASSROOM ORGANISATION]

1	Conduciveness of the learning space	1	2	3	4
2	The size of the class	1	2	3	4
3	Classroom management	1	2	3	4
4	Learner arrangement	1	2	3	4
5	Educator's overall appearance	1	2	3	4
Total					

SECTION B: [PROCEDURES FOR LESSON PRESENTATION]

1	Lesson introduction	1	2	3	4
2	Knowledge of assessment techniques	1	2	3	4
3	Skill in imparting knowledge	1	2	3	4
4	Questions/instructions clear with sufficient waiting time	1	2	3	4
5	Management of written work	1	2	3	4
Total					

SECTION C: [DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES WHICH OCCUR IN THE CLASSROOM]

1	Degree of orphaned learners' participation	1	2	3	4
---	--	---	---	---	---

2	Degree to which orphaned learners understand English	1	2	3	4
3	Communication between orphaned learners and the educator	1	2	3	4
4	Orphaned learners engagement during class activities	1	2	3	4
5	Behaviour of orphaned learners	1	2	3	4
Total					

COMMENTS:

1. Unacceptable
2. Satisfy minimum expectations
3. Good
4. Outstanding

APPENDIX I: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Communication

The researcher set a date with the principal and head of department of the school as well as the educator to be observed at least two weeks in advance, indicating the wish to observe the presentation of a lesson as soon as permission to do so had been granted by the school.

Observation Day

- ❖ The researcher accompanied the educator to the class to observe the lesson presentation within the time period which had been agreed upon for the researcher to conduct the research.
- ❖ The observation instrument guided the observation process (Appendix I).
- ❖ The learners were reassured that no video recordings whatsoever would be made but that only voice recordings and notes would be taken.
- ❖ The lesson observations lasted for a period of 30 minutes.

APPENDIX J: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Stage 1: Introductions

First the researcher greeted the participants. She then introduced herself and asked the participants to introduced themselves.

Stage 2: Checking whether the participants were available to participate in the focus group discussions on the topic in question.

The researcher asked the participants the following questions:

“I am here to discuss with you how orphanhood affects your academic performance. Are you free to participate in this discussion or do you have any suggestions for another place and/or time? Please feel free to provide your inputs”.

Stage 3: indicating the purpose of the interview.

“Kindly note that I am a registered master’s student with the University of South Africa and I would like to investigate how orphanhood affects your performance academically. I wish to ask you about your experiences as educators who teach both orphaned learners and non-orphaned learners. All the information you give me will be treated as highly confidential and your names will not be included in the report but, instead, you will be refereed as School 1 Respondent 1, Respondent 2 and Respondent 3”.

Stage 4: Motivation for the interview.

The researcher used the guiding remarks below in order to motivate the purpose of the interview:

“After the analysis of the data collected from you, I will write a report that will contribute towards my fulfilling the requirements for the completion of my master’s degree, I hope to use this information to improve the performance of orphaned learners from disadvantaged backgrounds as well as to make you aware that being

an orphan does not necessarily mean that the learner is not capable of performing well academically. I will also highlight the importance of the orphaned learners recognising the fact that, regardless of any challenges, they, and they alone, has the potential to excel in any area of their choice through dedication, hard work and the right attitude towards learning”.

The information that I will collect here will also help to promoting the practice of taking care of orphans and to be patient in a way that will enhance the academic performance in the school.

*The title of my thesis is: **The academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools In Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa.** The following main research question was formulated for the purposes of the study: what are the perceptions of learners and educators about the academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools in the Shamavunga circuit, Limpopo province?*

In view of the fact that you are among the orphaned learners in this school, I believe you are the most reliable people to share with me some of your learning experiences as orphans. Should you wish to communicate any matter related to this interview I will give you my contact details, my supervisor’s contact details as well as those of the University of South Africa.

Stage 5: Duration of the interview.

“This interview is supposed to last for forty minutes. Do you think you are available to start responding to the questions now? Kindly note that the interview session will be audio recorded for transcription and report writing purposes”.

Stage 6: Commencement of the interview session.

The researcher will begin the interviews by asking the questions below as they apply to categories of participants. In addition, the researcher will ascertain from the participants whether they are comfortable with notes being taken:

Learners

(1) What are your the experiences of learning in the same class as non-orphaned learners?

(2) What are the attitudes of the educators and the other non-orphaned learners towards you in the class?

(3) What do you think are the factors which play a role in your performing academically?

(4) What can the educators, the community and the government do to assist in the improvement of your academic performance?

(5) Do you think, as orphans, you are capable of achieving higher marks than seems to be currently the case? Give reasons for your answer.

(6) What do you think could be done to make you feel accepted and to become proud of your orphanhood in relation to your academic performance?

Stage 7: Closing remarks.

The researcher will thank all the participants for their time and contributions. A summary of the interview proceedings will be given to them and they will be further reassured of their confidentiality and anonymity in the report.

The following contact details will be given to the participants once again:

(1) **Researcher:** Tsakani Gladys Ringani on +27782654758 or +27798399818 or email address lulanim6@gmail.com

(2) **Supervisor:** Dr O.C Potokri on cell +27 84 267 174 and email address cnuvie@gmail.com

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR FOCUS GROUP

In this confidentiality agreement between myself (researcher) and the respondent (Grade 12 orphaned learner) I, Tsakani Gladys Ringani, Identity Number 6804180427089, hereby undertake that I will treat the focus group interview and the discussion with the confidentiality it deserves and that I will not disclose the contents of the audio recordings to any person except the relevant personnel who will assess the report.

APPENDIX K: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Stage 1: Introductions.

First the researcher greeted the participants. She then introduced herself and asked the participants to introduce themselves.

Stage 2: Checking whether the participants are available to participate in the discussions on the topic in question.

The researcher asked the participants the following questions:

*I am here to discuss with you **the academic performance of orphaned learners in the Shamavunga Circuit**. Are you free to participate in this discussion or do you have any suggestions for another place and/or time? Please feel free to provide your inputs.*

Stage 3: indicating the purpose of the interview.

“Kindly note that I am a registered master’s student with the University of South Africa and I would like to investigate the academic performance of orphaned learners in the Shamavunga Circuit. I wish to ask you about your experiences as educators who teach learners, including orphaned learners”. All the information you give me will be treated as highly confidential and your names will not be included in the report, instead you will be refereed as School 1 Respondent 1, Respondent 2 and Respondent 3.

Stage 4: Motivation for the interview.

The researcher will use the guiding remarks below to motivate the purpose of the interview:

After the collection and the analysis of the data which has been collected I will write a report that will contribute towards my fulfilling the requirements for the completion

of my master's degree. I hope to use this information to the improve academic performance of orphaned learners. *it is hoped that the information that I gather here will also contribute to the improvement of the academic results of your school and of the entire circuit.*

*The title of my thesis is: **The academic performance of orphaned learners at high school In Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa***

*The following main research question was formulated for the purposes of the study: **What are the perceptions of learners and educators about the academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools in the Shamavunga circuit, Limpopo province?***

Having been an educator in this sampled secondary school for number of years I believe you are the most reliable person to share some of your experiences with me in teaching orphans and in observing their relationships with educators and other non-orphan learners. Should you wish to communicate any matter related to this interview I will give you my contact details, my supervisor's contact details as well as those of the University of South Africa.

Stage 5: Duration of the interview.

"This interview should take forty minutes. Are you available to start answering the questions now? Kindly note that the interview session will be audio recorded for transcription and report writing purposes".

Stage 6: Commencement of the interview session.

The researcher will begin the interviews by posing the questions listed in Appendix L: Individual Interview Questions. The researcher will also ascertain from the participants whether agree that notes be taken:

Stage 7: Closing remarks.

The researcher will thank all the participants for their time and contribution. A summary of the interview proceedings will be given to them and they be will further reassured of their confidentiality and anonymity in the report.

The following contact details will be given to the participation once again:

(1) **Researcher:** Tsakani Gladys Ringani, House 170 B4, Kremetart, Nyalalaan Street, Giyani. Cell +2778 265 4758/+2779 839 9818

(2) **Supervisor:** Dr OC Potokri Cell +27 84 267 174 and email address cnuvie@gmail.com

APPENDIX L: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The questions below will serve as guidelines for the individual interviews that will be conducted between the researcher and Grades 10 to 12 educators. The researcher will ask the participants the following questions:

I am here to discuss with you the academic performance of orphaned learners in high schools in Shamavunga Circuit. Are you free to participate in this discussion or do you have any suggestions for another place and/or time? Please feel free to provide your inputs.

I wish to ask you about your experiences as educators teaching orphaned learners in Grades 10 to 12 with regard to their academic performance.

*The following main research question was formulated for the purposes of this study, namely, **What are the perceptions of learners and educators about the academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools in the Shamavunga circuit, Limpopo province?***

6.1 Educators

(1) How long have you, as an educator, been teaching orphaned learners and what have you noted with regard to their academic performance?

(2) How does the performance of orphaned learners affect the school itself and the circuit as a whole?

(3) What do you think are the factors which play a role in the orphans not performing academically?

The following contact details will be given to the participation once again:

(1) **Researcher:** Tsakani Gladys Ringani, House 170 B4, Kremetart, Nyalalaan Street, Giyani, Cel +2778 265 4758/+2779 839 9818

(2) **Supervisor:** Dr O . C Potokri Cell +27 84 267 174 and email address cnuvie@gmail.com

APPENDIX M: DURATION OF ORPHANHOOD

The instrument devised in relation to the duration of orphanhood (below) will be used as a basis in order to identify for how long the learners have been orphans to enable the researcher to deal with learners who have been recently orphaned. The local social worker will be invited in case the learners become emotional during the interviews.

Orphan	Gender	Age	Grade	Duration of orphanhood
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

APPENDIX N: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR THE FOCUS GROUP

I, Tsakani Gladys Ringani, Student Number 4414 684 1, Identity Number 680418 0427 089, referred to herein as the researcher for the study entitled Academic performance of orphaned learners at High schools, Shamavunga Circuit *in Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa* hereby enter into agreement with my participant _____ (Name) who will participate in the study as an orphan learner.

The information that you will convey to me will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. You have the right to insist that your name not be recorded anywhere and that no one, with the exception of the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research study and that no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. Your answers will be assigned a code number or a pseudonym, for example, Respondent Number 1, and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

The only person who will have access to your name is myself. Your answers may be reviewed by the people who are responsible for ensuring that this research study has been conducted, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be linked to the information that you share during the focus group, I am not able to guarantee that the other participants in the focus group will treat the information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do

so. It is for this reason, however, that I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information within the focus group.

Signatures:

Learner:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Alexa Barnby

Language Specialist

Editing, copywriting, indexing, formatting, translation

BA Hons Translation Studies; APED (SATI) Accredited Professional Text Editor,
SATI

Mobile: 071 872 1334

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alexabarnby@gmail.com

4 July 2018

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I, Alexa Kirsten Barnby, an English editor accredited by the South African Translators' Institute, have edited the master's dissertation titled "The academic performance of orphaned learners at high schools in Shamavunga Circuit, Limpopo province, South Africa" by Tsakani Gladys Ringani.

The onus is, however, on the author to make the changes and address the comments made.

